

Howard County Issues

Volume 1 Issue 2 Summer 2007

A Publication from Howard County Independent Voters

BRAC Growth: Dodging a Bullet or Embracing Opportunity

From Elizabeth Bobo, Maryland State Delegate



BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure) represents the largest influx of residents and jobs since WWII. We will not have another chance like this in our lifetime. We can take this opportunity to shore up Baltimore City, thus helping the entire state of Maryland and avoid overburdening the counties.

The counties are already struggling to keep up with demands on local infrastructure; water/sewer, transit, roads, schools. Baltimore has been losing population to the counties over the years. It has more of the required infrastructure in place to accommodate the coming influx.

Howard County has virtually no unemployment. In Baltimore City that is not the case, so it would clearly benefit from BRAC jobs. BRAC jobs going to the counties would most likely require more homebuilding and the infrastructure that goes with it. These same counties are already under pressure from demand for roads and schools for pre-BRAC growth.

I realize that competition among counties is a long-standing practice. On balance, it makes sense to me for the counties not to compete so strongly for these new jobs. If the economic development offices were asked not to go after these jobs and residents so aggressively, and instead direct some of them to Baltimore City, the entire state would benefit. At times, not enough attention is paid to regionalism, what is best for the whole region.

Study after study has shown that new housing in the counties does not pay for itself. The cost of building more roads, schools, and water and sewer facilities outweighs the increase in revenue. In Howard County it now costs \$10,000 in operating funds to send one child

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From Rick Silber, HC Chamber of Commerce, Howard County Business Owner



The only thing constant is change. Therefore, we should always be prepared for the inevitable. If change is going to occur it is in our interest to manage it to the best of our collective abilities.

The Base Realignment And Closure (BRAC) puts Howard and the surrounding counties on the receiving end of a build-up of high paying government jobs. The resulting business associated with BRAC will definitely be a benefit for the region. Many new jobs will come to our area and this is a good problem to have.

People who currently commute from Howard County to The District of Columbia or Northern Virginia no longer need to commute and may be able to find jobs right here at home after the BRAC realignment occurs. Some of the high tech positions that will become available here should be well suited for telecommuting.

Due to our proximity to the Federal Government our region has been very resilient to the economic ups and downs that effect other areas of the country. The BRAC realignment should solidify our economic stability for now and on into the future.

Yes, the opportunity is certainly available. We can build infrastructure, provide funding for our first class schools and do many things that will create a region that is robust and vibrant, mainly due to economic growth.

However, there are some concerns: traffic, housing, schools, the environment and others.

The Howard County Chamber of Commerce has for years presented our position, in the form of a White Paper, on many of these and other issues. The Chamber is represented on several Task Forces that specifically address BRAC issues.

From Kent Menser

Executive Director of the Howard County Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) Office
Office of the County Executive

Howard County's BRAC Task Force includes 130 residents, business women and men who staff 11 Committees. Their mission is to prepare the county for the impacts of Fort Meade growth and take advantage of its opportunities. The four components of this growth are projected to bring 22,000 new job positions to Fort Meade during the next 5-7 years. The four components are:

- NSA Growth: 4,000
- Enhanced Use Lease Growth Capacity: 10,000
- BRAC Growth: 6,000
- Additional Growth at Fort Meade: 2,000

Members of the Task Force are currently analyzing regional and county growth data so that it may be transformed into relevant information that can be used in decision-making by our residents, businesses and county government. We understand that projecting job and household locations and numbers will be critical to our study. We know that many factors will ultimately influence where families will want to live. The Task Force does not market Howard County, but with the other counties surrounding Fort Meade, educates those new employees and their families on the quality of life and the wide variety of resources available in our region.

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READER COMMENTARY

Handling Growth

from Byron MacFarlane

Having lived in Ellicott City, West Friendship, and Woodstock all my life, I, like all of us, understand the immense importance of open space, preserving Howard County’s farming tradition, and balancing the interests of developers and the public at large. In both our county flag and our seal, a sheaf of wheat is prominently displayed, highlighting the agricultural heritage of Howard County, the legacy of the Ellicotts, the Carrolls, the Ridgelys, and shown in the background of our seal, rolling hills, conveying the image of a proudly rural county.

Howard County is at a crossroads with development and growth, and we all have one thing on our minds—how can we preserve the Howard County we know and love?

We all know the issues we face: where to build, how much to build, how quickly to build, how much to expect from developers, how growth will impact our infrastructure, and how we can ensure affordable living space. I think the best way to begin a conversation on growth is by keeping an open mind and looking for common ground we can start from. Allow me to offer some general thoughts:

First, development has serious repercussions for existing residents and developers should be required to contribute significantly to the community. New developments mean enormous up-front costs in terms of school capacity and roads, and growth is occurring so quickly that to saddle taxpayers with massive tax increases to pay for these up-front costs is simply unfair.

Second, to the fullest extent of the law and the ability of our county government to influence housing costs, we have to balance high-end home construction with affordable housing. The county can’t create \$500 per month apartment rents simply as a matter of economics, but we can provide incentives to developers to build affordable rental housing and affordable owner-occupied housing along with larger, more expensive development. What is most important with this issue is that we shed our fears and stereotypes about affordable housing. As a resident of Waverly Woods, I was very disappointed

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From DWRD in Western Howard:

Howard County has recently tended toward an autocracy such that 20+ story buildings could be approved by political appointees (the Planning Board) and we’re now seeing that the populace wants a vote in it’s county’s future. There are changes that can be made to the County Charter to prevent these backroom agreements between developers and county officials.

An excellent Code of Ethics has been written and is available from the National Association of Counties. All we need to do is change the county charter to use their Code of Ethics instead of our own, and make changes so that the Ethics Commission is more accountable for their decisions - right now their meeting minutes are never made public. Right now, the county charter only allows punishment for county employees, not for the political appointees who can really do the most damage by backroom deals. The charter must be changed.

One of the developer’s tools (that is fully supported by a government whose main campaign funding comes from the developers) is the use of retroactive zoning changes so that when someone wants to build a structure, be it a shed or a skyscraper, they just change the regulations to allow it. A number of states have provisions in their state constitutions that prevent counties from using retroactive zoning changes - except to protect public safety.

Finally, the county has no Office of the Inspector General to conduct independent evaluations of whether the various departments are acting within their guidelines effectively. Every department of the Federal Government has one and they have been incredibly effective at making Federal departments accountable. No organization is able to effectively police itself, be it a church, a government department, a professional organization or even a charitable organization. Howard County needs an OIG to perform governance over itself.

Visit the National Association of Counties at: www.naco.org

19 readers responded to our first issue identifying areas of interest. Below, in order of number of mentions, are the most frequently mentioned issues:

- Land Use and Development issues
- Political Representative Vote Tracking
- Environment
- Budget & Spending
- Campaign Finance

And the following each received one mention:

- Senior Tax
- Housing Market
- BRAC (Base Realignment and Closure)
- Columbia Assn President
- Education & Library
- Advertiser Issues
- Support Local Issues
- Public Safety
- County Office of Inspector General
- Investigative writing
- Role of deception in govt
- Entertainment

From LW in Columbia:

I would like to know how the people who represent our county in the General Assembly and the County Council vote on different bills. I have had trouble finding out this information.

From Ken in Ellicott City:

The absence of clear budget controls and management. We are very supportive of government, but believe there is a responsibility to show attempts to manage effectively, and don’t see that happening here in the County—either either with the current Administration or the previous one. Budget increases like those just approved at the state and county level may be understandable but it isn’t obvious that they are supportable over the next several years. We need to think about what we are doing.

Listen to voters on the issues from across the country, including Howard County callers at 90.1 FM starting at 7am daily on C-Span’s Washington Journal, or at www.c-span.org.

Howard County Council Voting Dec 2006 - May 2007
http://www.howardcountymd.gov/CountyCouncil/CC_ArchivedBills_2007.htm

Bill #	ISSUE	Ball	Fox	Sigaty	Terrasa	Watson
CB4	An Act to require that pre-submission community meetings required for residential subdivision applications in the County be held in public or institutional buildings within a five mile radius of the subdivision site.	y	y	y	y	y
CB5	An Act to require that pre-submission community meetings required for residential subdivision applications in the County be held for minor sub-divisions outside the Planned Service Area for Public Water and Sewer.	y	y	y	y	y
CB6	An Act to require developers to send notice of pre-submission community meetings at least three weeks prior to the scheduled meeting and <u>allow citizens to request a meeting with a staff member of the Department of Planning and Zoning.</u>	y	y	y	y	y
CB7	AN ACT amending certain definitions related to firearms control; adding certain definitions; adding that certain prohibitions shall not apply to a public safety officer acting within the scope of the officer's official duties or to certain transfers of electronic weapons; and generally related to firearms control.	y	y	y	n	y
CB8	AN ACT amending the Plumbing and Gasfitting Code for Howard County to adopt certain local amendments relating to certain plumbing facilities, fixtures, and fire protection systems; and generally relating to the Plumbing and Gasfitting Code for Howard County.	y	y	y	y	y
SAO5-FY07	AN ACT transferring \$44,100 from the Grant Fund Contingency to the Department of Police for a grant to combat gangs and gang violence.	y	y	y	y	y

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CB9-2007	AN ACT providing for a credit against the County property tax for certain devices that generate electricity under certain circumstances; providing for an application date for the credit and generally relating to property tax credits.	y	recused	y	y	y
ENRCB10-2007	AN ACT altering the qualifications for a property tax credit for certain senior citizens; providing for the rate of the credit; clarifying certain calculations; providing for publicity for the credit; and generally relating to property tax credits.	y	n	y	y	n
CB11-2007	AN ACT requiring applicants for a certain property tax credit to also apply for other credits; clarifying how certain property tax credits are to be applied; and generally relating to property tax credits.	n	y	n	n	y
CB12-2007	AN ACT altering the amount of the County supplement to the Homeowners' Property Tax Credit; repealing a certain property tax credit for certain senior citizens; and generally relating to property tax credits.	y	y	y	y	y
ENRCB13-2007	AN ACT amending the 2000 General Plan by adjusting the Planned Service Area boundary of the Master Plan for Water and Sewerage to include a religious facility located on approximately 12.47 acres with an address of 8300 Old Columbia Road, Fulton, Howard County, Maryland; and generally relating to the 2000 General Plan.	y	y	y	y	y
CB14-2007	AN ACT amending the 2000 General Plan by adjusting the Planned Service Area boundary of the Master Plan for Water and Sewerage to include a religious facility located on approximately 3.28 acres with an address of 11795 Scaggsville Road, Fulton, Howard County, Maryland; and generally relating to the 2000 General Plan.	y	y	y	y	y

Howard County Planning Board Voting (As available Since Dec 2006)

www.co.ho.md.os/dpz/archives.htm

PB#	ISSUE	CitaraManis	Dombrowski	Grabowski	Rosenbaum
PB377	General Plan Amendment – St. Francis of Assisi Church	Y	Y	Y	Y
CSDP-07-01	Turf Valley Vistas, Lot 139; James Carothers, applicant	Y	Y	Y	Y
SDP-07-36	Site Development Plan for the construction of a Costco Gasoline Station	Y	Y	Y	Y
SDP-06-113	For approval of a Site Development Plan for the construction of 40 single family attached dwelling units and other related site improvements. The site is located on the southwest side of Eternal Rings Road and Iron Leaf Trail.	Y	Y	Y	Y
FDP-77A-II	Village of Long Reach revisions would affect Lot 581 of the Village of Long Reach, consisting of 10 acres along Tamar Drive	Y	Y	Y	Y
CB____-2007	AN ACT amending the 2000 General Plan by adjusting the Planned Service Area boundary of the Master Plan for Water and Sewerage to include a religious facility located on approximately 3.28 acres	Y	Y	Y	Y
ASDP-04-158	For Planning Board approval to exceed the FDP Phase 2-A-VIII maximum lot coverage of 30% to allow 36.9% coverage for a house under construction and two decks	Y	Y	Y	Y
PB 377 – SDP-06-15	For Planning Board approval of 33 residential lots and 3 open space lots in a Residential-Environmental Development Zoning District, a Residential-Environmental Development Zoning District, on land belonging to Jericho LLC and Harry F. Geelhaar, Jr. located in the First Election District	Y	Y	Y	Y
SDP-05-105	For approval of a site development plan for the construction of two additional industrial Buildings located on the east side of Oakland Mills Road	Y	A	Y	Y
SDP-05-47	Maple Lawn Farms project approval for a red-line revision of a site development plan (SDP) for the construction of a new one-story warehouse	Y	A	Y	Y
PB 378	Maple Lawn Amended Comprehensive Sketch Plan	Y	A	Y	Y
SDP-07-06	Mt. Gregory United Methodist Church – Request for Planning Board approval of a Cemetery Boundary Documentation and Accommodation Plan for an existing cemetery	Y	A	Y	Y

In Memorium: County Residents and Associations Honor Fallen Howard County Officer

On June 18 the Howard County Police Department lost PFC Scott Wheeler as a result of injuries sustained in the line of duty. PFC Wheeler was assigned to the Police Department’s Southern District Station which provides services to the Village of River Hill.



In recognition of PFC Wheeler’s service to Howard County, the River Hill Community Association has draped the entrance to Claret Hall and placed black ribbons on trees adjacent to the building. The community is grateful for the dedication and professionalism exhibited by PFC Wheeler and the Howard County Police Department. Larry Blickman, the Village Board Vice Chair commented, “Howard County has experienced the untimely and tragic loss of PFC Wheeler. His loss not only affects the police community, but more importantly his wife, family and friends. His dedication and commitment to serve and protect must always be remembered by the citizens of this county. The River Hill Community Association extends our deepest sympathy to Officer Wheeler’s wife, family, friends, and the Howard County Police Department.”

A fund has been established for donations to the Wheeler family. Donations can be mailed to The Scott Wheeler Memorial Fund, c/o the Howard County Police Foundation, 3410 Court House Drive, Ellicott City, MD 21043. Donations may also be made to the Fallen Officer Association at the same address.

<http://mlis.state.md.us/>
Maryland Senate and House Votes (Howard Delegation)
Spring 2007

Bill #	ISSUE	SENATORS						DELEGATES				
		Robey	Kittleman	Kasemeyer	Turner	Pendergrass	Miller	Malone, Jr.	Guzzone	DeBoy, Sr.	Bobo	Bates
SB1	Early Voting, or Statewide Voting with no ID	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
SB696	Prohibiting a person from leaving a dog outside and unattended by use of a specified restraint	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
SB552/HB164	Relocatable Classrooms - Indoor Air Quality Standards	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB546/HB731 (failed)	Establishing a system of public financing of campaigns for candidates for the General Assembly; establishing an Election Financing Commission; creating the Public Election Fund	Y	Y	N								
HB36	Clarifying the availability of books and records kept by or on behalf of a common ownership community	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB1433	Prohibiting a person from providing false animal health or other false identifying information, reports or documents	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB1242	Providing for a process for handling a complaint filed with the State Open Meetings Compliance Board when the public body that is the subject of the complaint no longer exists	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB590	State Taxes - Solar Energy Grants and Devices	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB156	Requiring, instead of authorizing, an insurer to provide specified notice to specified third party claimants if payment, in the amount of \$2,000 or more	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB876	Prohibiting a person from knowingly soliciting specified persons for prostitution; prohibiting a person from obtaining or attempting to obtain labor or services by specified means	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Not voting	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB461	Labor and Employment - Maryland Workforce Investment Act - Transit Service for Low-Income Individuals	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB640/HB747	Requiring a specified invoice and specified authorization of repairs form to include a specified notice about motor vehicle manufacturer warranty adjustment programs	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB935	Requiring vehicular traffic approaching a highway from an exit ramp from an expressway and facing a nonfunctioning traffic control signal to stop (SEE BILL)	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB766/HB1131	Prohibiting using, selling, manufacturing, or distributing household dishwashing machine detergent that contains more than 0.5 percent of phosphorus	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB817	Repealing specified restrictions on holding live thoroughbred racing at night and on Sundays	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB986	Authorizing the creation of a State Debt in the amount of \$11,126,000, the proceeds to be used as a grant to the Interagency Committee on School Construction	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB1033	Tax Credits for Individuals Facing Employment Barriers	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB440	Vehicle Laws - Engine Brakes - Restrictions	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB922	Landlord and Tenant - Expiration of Warrant - Striking Judgment for Possession	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB1356	authorizing the approval of a motor vehicle or bicycle racing event only if the specified conditions are met	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB281	Requiring the Mental Hygiene Administration to reimburse for specified services; requiring the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services to provide access to a 30-day supply of medication to specified individuals; establishing a specified immunity from civil liability	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB413	Repealing the authority of the State Board for Professional Engineers to issue limited licenses to practice engineering on a specified job	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB793	Establishing a Statewide Steering Committee on Services for Adults with Sickle Cell Disease	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB949	make specified findings concerning specified barriers to licensing or certifying individuals who have training and experience in providing health care through military service	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB988	Prohibiting health occupation boards from action as reprisal against specified licensees or certificate holders under specified circumstances	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y

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Bill #	ISSUE	SENATORS						DELEGATES				
		Robey	Kittleman	Kasemeyer	Turner	Pendergrass	Miller	Malone, Jr.	Guzzone	DeBoy, Sr.	Bobo	Bates
SB693/HB216	HIV Testing - Exposure - Forensic Scientist	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB702	Yellow Perch Conservation and Sustainability Act	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB774/HB1049	Establishing the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine subcommittee in the Cervical Cancer Committee	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB873/HB1181	Altering the process for the appointment of specified members of the Task Force to Study State Assistance to Veterans	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB915/HB1412	Adding a member of the Colonial Chapter of the Paralyzed Veterans of America to the Maryland Veterans Commission	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB937/HB1177	Repealing the State Board for Certification of Residential Child Care Program Administrators Fund	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB973	Authorizing the Department of the Environment to serve complaints, corrective orders, notices, or other instruments	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB1022	Authorizing insurers that issue policies of group life insurance to extend coverage to the domestic partner of the employee or member	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
SB83	Sexual Offenders - Evaluation Before Sentencing	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Not voting	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB332/HB942	Establishing the Maryland Green Building Council	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB632/HB713	Prohibiting a person from participating in a specified criminal gang knowing that the members of the gang engage in a specified pattern of criminal gang activity	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB920/HB1359	Individuals with Developmental Disabilities Respite Care - Sunset Extension	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB1018/HB627	Task Force to Study Rent Stabilization for the Elderly in Prince George's County	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB1030	Critical Areas - Applications for Variances - Local Jurisdictions	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
SB237/HB102	Natural Resources - Open Air Burning Limitations - Application	Y	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB148/HB133	Establishing the Oyster Advisory Commission in the Department of Natural Resources	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB204	study and compile information regarding specified costs associated with textbooks for higher education	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Not voting
SB784/HB786	Stormwater Management Act of 2007	Y	Y	Y	A	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB772	Authorizing the Howard County Council to provide by ordinance for an administrative proceeding to enforce specified zoning violations; and providing that a specified ordinance may include authority to impose specified civil fines and penalties and create	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB883/HB1284	Ground Leases - Redemption - Preferred Interest Rate Loans	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB390	Sexual Offenders - Evaluation Before Sentencing	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB423	Workforce Housing Grant Program - Fund Establishment - Administrative Clarifications	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB576/HB689	Defining the term "emergency responder" for purposes of the Maryland Emergency Management Assistance Compact	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB745	Requiring the State to ensure that at least 50% of the heating equipment using specified heating oil in State buildings and 50% of the heavy equipment owned by the State using diesel fuel use, subject to availability, a blend of fuel containing at least 5	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB759/HB1030	Requiring a wholesale distributor to hold a permit issued by the State Board of Pharmacy before the wholesale distributor engages in the wholesale distribution of prescription drugs or devices in the State	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
HB1288	Requiring individuals who sell any real estate as sales agents for home builders to be licensed by the State Real Estate Commission	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
SB624/HB992	a person convicted of a specified drug-related offense is not eligible for parole during a specified mandatory minimum sentence if the person has been convicted of a violation of a specified crime of violence arising out of the incident	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	A	Y	N	Y	N

DELEGATES

[illegible]

Maryland Senate and House Votes (Howard Delegation)
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[illegible]

Maryland Senate and House Votes (Howard Delegation) Spring 2007

[illegible]

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DELEGATES

[illegible]

Maryland Senate and House Votes (Howard Delegation) Spring 2007

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(continued form page 1, Elizabeth Bobo)

to school for a year. A new high school now costs nearly \$100 million. The new sewer line being constructed along Route 29 to Savage is budgeted at \$50 million. Clearly our expenditures would rise faster than the revenues from the BRAC pressure.

Baltimore City would not have to build as much new infrastructure since most of it is already in place. City revenues would likely outweigh costs as enhancements were made to existing infrastructure, such as schools. When the City improves, the entire state improves. Baltimore is like any other big city in terms of struggles, and this is a once in a lifetime opportunity to positively impact its economic outlook in a major way.

The effect on property value is hard to predict because of recent ups and downs in the housing market including sub-prime loans leading to defaults on mortgages. We have about 100,000 residences in Howard County, and while 5,000 new residences would be a lot, the effect on property values would be minimal, if even visible.

Affordable housing is an area where we could do much better. We’ve done an inadequate job for a long time in this area, and this is a topic that needs serious attention. BRAC would have little to no effect on affordable housing in Howard County. What is needed is strong county and state programs.

During this past legislative session when representatives from Ft. Meade first appeared before the Environmental Matters committee on which I serve, they presented a map with targeted areas for the influx of BRAC residents. Baltimore City was not even on the map. The Governor and the Maryland Legislature have since prepared their own map on which Baltimore is prominently featured.

It is inevitable that Howard County will continue to grow. Year in and year out during the legislative session in Annapolis we hear the same message from the counties: “Our schools are bursting at the seams and our roads are severely over-burdened.” If we can just reign in our competitive nature, here is an opportunity to help rather than aggravate that situation.

(continued form page 2, Byron MacFarlane)

with the bitterly negative reaction to a plan to build an affordable, green, housing complex in our development for moderate-income seniors. We need more of this kind of reasonable, balanced growth.

Third, we must preserve northern and western Howard County from unlimited development. Some may go so far as to say we should bring growth to a halt entirely and some say the sky is the limit, but we know a balanced approach is what is most fair to those looking to move here, our landowners who want to develop, and our residents who will be impacted by growth. We can restrict growth through the zoning process, prevent the expansion of public water further west, set aside additional park and green space, encourage the state to increase funding for agricultural preservation programs, and limit road expansion. None of us enjoys sitting through traffic so expanding and improving roads is necessary.

We have some significant challenges ahead, but I’ve offered some brief thoughts on general approaches and philosophies we should use in the years to come, and I hope we can direct our energies toward compromise and common ground rather than division.

**Getting off the Rate Hike Bus,
By Michael Cornell, Columbia Association, Board of Directors**

When you open your utility bill this month, be sure to be sitting down. Welcome to D-Day for BGE consumers in Maryland. Chances are your utility bills may increase by as much as 50% or more this month. If you are a senior citizen living on a fixed income, you now have harder choices to make - heat, food or medicine.

As an environmentalist, you would think I would welcome the BGE rate hike. Higher energy prices mean greater demand and acceptance of green alternatives and energy efficient vehicles devices and methods.

Here is where I get off the rate hike bus (hopefully one that runs on natural gas!).

Corporate highway robbery and energy efficiency are two different issues. There is a stark difference between the need to conserve, protect our environment and stop global warming versus the ability of a corporation to reap huge profits at the expense of the Maryland Citizenry because of well-meaning but shortsighted elected officials in the last decade.

(continued form page 1, Kent Menser)

The seven areas where we are evaluating Fort Meade growth requirements vs. current capacity in Howard County are:

- 1. Education
- 2. Health and Human Services
- 3. Infrastructure (roads, utilities, land use)
- 4. Housing (affordable)
- 5. Transportation
- 6. Workforce Development
- 7. Public Safety

The growth of Fort Meade over the next 5-7 years will have an effect on Howard County whether we want it to happen or not. The good news is that this growth is being assessed prior to its arrival. We have not always had the opportunity to analyze specific growth in the county before it arrives. The fact that we can do that today will assist us in our preparatory planning.

All of our meetings are open to the public and on the 4th Wednesday of each month we hold a BRAC/Fort Meade growth update in the Howard Building from 7-9 PM. Please call Kent Menser at 410-313-6521 if you have any questions.



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and a wide assortment of sport teams.

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Located in Ellicott City

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eyeoftheneedle@comcast.net

Customized Products for All Your Needs!

(continued from page 15, Michael Cornell)

Many politicians respond to questions about BGE rate hikes by deflecting the conversation towards energy efficiency and conservation. Sounds like something the CEO of Constellation/BGE would say. But then again, his company benefits from the rate hike - as do all the politicians whose campaign war chests are filled each election cycle by his company.

Just a few short years ago, legislators in Annapolis protected Columbians from a huge rate hike of association fees. Now, it is time for the Maryland Assembly to go back into special session and do the same for residents across the state with regard to soaring energy fees.

Del. Jill Carter has called for a Special Session to deal with this. Many groups, including the NAACP and the Maryland Green Party, have endorsed a proposal to put rate caps back on and have the state takeover the utility through eminent domain. So far, the Governor, the Senate President Mike Miller and House Speaker Mike Busch have been tone deaf to calls for a special session.

At the very least, you can write or call your elected officials to call for a special session.

Or, you can keep your seat on the rate hike bus.

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