

February 2020

From the Desk of the President

It's a new year and a new decade, and with it comes a change in ownership of the Talbot County Business Center. In 2017, the County transferred general funds over to the Airport's budget to purchase the *former* Black and Decker building located on Glebe Road in Easton. This transaction was part of the Airport's masterplan to demolish the building and re-acquire critical airport runway area – the extension of runway 4-22. Once the FAA repaid the Airport the purchase price and those funds were transferred back to the County's General Fund, the Airport then took over control of the building. Airport Manager Micah Risher has assured the tenants in the Business Center that the change in ownership will bring about no difference in their lease arrangement. He has also informed the tenants and the County Council, however, that planning for the demolition of the building is underway. Tenants like The Whalen Company, which occupies nearly 50 percent of the building, have now started the search (*in earnest*) for new space.

With the pending demolition of the Talbot County Business Center building approaching, the County is seeking relocation sites for those County departments located in the building. Since the Sheriff's Office is one such County operation currently occupying space in the Business Center, the County Council is examining several options to build a new structure to house the Sheriff's Office. Preliminary numbers from the County Finance Office project that a new building will cost the County between \$10 and \$12 million dollars.

The County Council is also examining the need for a new Paramedic Unit to be located in the northern end of the County. Director Stamp noted that the Emergency Medical System (EMS) system is being stretched due to an increase in call volumes, coupled with ambulances being delayed or redirected to other hospitals outside the County.

In the southern end of the County, the Council recently heard from the County Engineer, Ray Clarke, along with Public Works Advisory Board Chair, William Anderson, concerning comments to the Maryland Department of Environment (MDE) on the discharge permit application for the Lakeside development in Trappe. Clarke expressed the concerns of the Public Works Advisory Board (PWAB) regarding several inconsistencies in the Lakeside application. As a course of action, MDE allows for public comment on its discharge applications. Clarke pointed out to the Council that the permit did not account for the change in the treatment system nor the appropriate levels of effluent. Anderson pointed out that the former permit granted to Lakeside had expired and the developer had failed to renew it in the allotted time period. After hearing from both Anderson and Clarke, the Council agreed to submit all the concerns to MDE for its consideration before deciding whether to grant a new discharge permit.

And further south, the County Council is looking to establish sewer service for the Ferry Point area. The Council has already commissioned a preliminary engineering report from Bayland Consultants and Designers, Inc. to study the feasibility of building a stand-alone wastewater treatment service or perhaps extending a sewer line from the Town of Trappe. The Council sees the Ferry Point area as a commercial gateway and sewer will increase the potential to retain and attract new business opportunities there, while addressing future septic systems failures.

The Council continues its work with the Short Term Rental Review Board, which had submitted comments to the Council for proposed changes in the short term rental process. The Council held two public work sessions at the Community Center to discuss proposed changes and both were very well attended. The Council also received several comments from citizens, as well as from members of the property rental industry and County staff. As it was announced to the audience attending the work-sessions, the “straw” votes taken are not final but serve to give staff direction in the drafting of new language regarding regulation of short term rentals. Once the Office of Law has completed its duties as legal drafter, these new policies will then be introduced at an upcoming Council meeting.

The Council is happy to announce the hiring of Sheena Van Ornum as the County’s new Housing Coordinator. The Council had to cut the Housing Coordinator position several years ago during the economic downturn and shortfalls in County revenue. The need for affordable housing has always been a concern in the County and the Council is again taking steps to assist in homeownership and home maintenance through this position. At the same time, the Council is saying goodbye to Joanne Dickey, the Landings Enforcement Officer, who is retiring in April after two years with Talbot County. She came to the County after 11 years as an officer with Maryland Department of Natural Resources Police.

February marks Black History month and the Council joins in celebrating and saluting those African Americans who have sacrificed and contributed in making this nation the greatest country in the world. The Talbot County Visitors Center offers a new Walking Tour guide to The Hill Community, (thehillcommunityproject.org), as well as a brochure about the four Frederick Douglass Driving Tours that the County offers. A Frederick Douglass website (frederickdouglassbirthplace.org) is mobile responsive and designed to help visitors take the tours and learn about his life in Talbot County. We hope you take advantage of these remarkable resources.

February is also National Heart Month and the Department of Emergency Services will be conducting its 9th Annual CPR Marathon which will be held at the Talbot County Community Center on Tuesday, February 25, 2020 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please register for the CPR Marathon at www.talbotdes.org.

Finally, the tax referendum committee has discussed several options for potential ballot questions to deal with property revenue constraints and will be forwarding them to the Council for the March meeting.

I end this message on a sad note as we mourn the passing of Former Easton Town Council President John Ford. John has served his community with passion, justice and kindness. We are thankful for John’s service to the County, his advocacy for those less fortunate, and for his thirst for knowledge. We send Peggy and his family our condolences.

I wish you a happy and healthy year in 2020! I hope you will continue to follow the Talbot County Council in the coming days as we continue to evaluate the needs of our County and how we can continue to contribute to the quality of life we all enjoy here.

Corey Pack, President

Talbot County Council