

Glenmont Exchange, Inc.
GlenmontExchange.org
Minutes of the February 2, 2015 meeting

Attendees: Rich Burnes, Josh Goodman, Ernie Benjamin, Aliyah Glenn, David Shaw, Dorinda Danneman, Tony Fracasso, Charlotte Crutchfield, Linda Hinton, Marc Elrich, Loy Jones.

The Agenda was approved. The Minutes were approved.

Treasury balance is still \$467.50.

Planning and Zoning committee is tasked with tracking proposed zoning and planning changes and other issues with zoning.

Ernie Benjamin's report: Not aware of any changes in zoning. The Interchange and apartment projects are proceeding. The issue of widening and improving Norbeck Road between Georgia Avenue and Burtonsville has been reopened. There is some discussion of extending the ICC to become part of an outer Beltway.

Josh Goodman's report on Plaza del Mercado renovation: LA Fitness may be putting a hold on expansion nationwide. Federal Realty may need to pursue another tenant. Aldi is still planning to proceed. Josh will report on status at next meeting.

Please notify Ernie of zoning items of interest: erniebenjamin@gmail.com.

Charlotte Crutchfield reminded that the Layhill Master Plan review will occur next summer.

President's Report on the year ahead: The Exchange currently has six individuals with responsibilities: the elected officers and the Zoning Committee. We would like to have members volunteer on more of our committees. The Exchange bylaws provide for six standing committees: Environment, Education, Legislation, Planning and Land Use, Public Finance, Public Safety and Transportation. Committee reports at our meetings could include proposals for debate, and voting to determine our position.

Exchange members are requested to spread the word to our civic minded friends and neighbors to help increase membership.

Marc Elrich, At Large Council Member, was our guest speaker: 2015 – The Year Ahead.

Marc foresees profound change in Annapolis. Maryland is the only state where the Governor proposes the Budget. This puts a cap on spending. The Legislature can only make different spending decisions. The Governor may reduce school spending by \$17M, spend less on transportation and cut the cost of living differential for non-profit providers. Example: the Autism Center – hiring at just above minimum wage, very hard to attract staff, almost no one is trained in the field.

During the Legislative session, the Legislature will want to move the budget money around, which is hard because something else will be cut.

The Governor is not receptive to Phosphorus legislation. Need to reduce untreated sewage flowing into the bay.

Transportation – funding of the Purple Line or the Red Line in Baltimore is undecided. Evaluate projects based on the economic value of each project.

Montgomery County – the proposal for the Transportation Authority was dropped. The roll-out of the plan was flawed, the proposals were unclear. Currently the Transit system is run by a division of the Department of Public Works. The current transit system is not a choice system – not a system for someone who has a choice of how they get around. The transit system should be run by someone who will deliver a system that ‘choice’ riders will use, possibly a new Transit Department.

We currently have new taxing districts to tax commercial properties; they are used to tax developers who want to develop their properties. Bethesda is about to be upzoned, White Oak and Glenmont have been upzoned. People want developers to be taxed their share and not be on the hook countywide.

Ride-On costs \$80M currently, BRT would reduce some Ride-On costs.

Preservation of affordable housing – Elrich helped prevent rezoning of Winexburg and Glenmont Forest. Privacy World is having trouble getting a grocery store until Wal-Mart decides about Aspen Hill. Wal-Mart is still trying to get into Aspen Hill under the Minor Master Plan. Full Aspen Hill Master Plan Revision to start summer 2015.

Elrich was kicked off the Fed Committee, where land use decisions are made. Members of the committee are supported by developer’s contributions. He will continue to attend their meetings.

The Falkland Apartments in Silver Spring - One of three buildings is to be torn down. The County passed up buying the property at \$115K/unit with \$30K/unit projected renovation costs to rent or sell as affordable housing. The County is not supporting tenant ownership. Turning tenants into owners makes for a stronger community. MPDU’s are currently for purchasers with \$60K-\$80K income.

Montgomery County has about 1000 homeless persons. If a homeless person has a permanent place to stay, their treatment costs go down. At Progress House in Silver Spring, people have to leave in the morning and are allowed to come back in the evening for a meal and to sleep on the floor. Many potential solutions are being explored, to add residential space over office space costs \$160K/unit; the Tiny House movement or Container Housing are possibilities. It is cheaper to use a shipping container one time that to ship it back. A furnished unit in a shipping container estimated cost is \$25K/unit. Looking into putting them on top of garages.

Josh Goodman mentioned an article he had seen and provided a link:

<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/09/22/home-free>

The homeless population consists of two groups. The first group is people that ran out of luck, and need help to get back on their feet. The second group has deep seated problems and are probably custodial for life. Marc is meeting with homeless organizations.

Marc is on the Education committee. Discussion of the English Manor school site in Aspen Hill and the plans to move the programs from Ewing Center to English Manor. This would allow the Ewing Center to be demolished to provide a new school bus depot that would replace the lot in Shady Grove which must be vacated soon. The current Ewing Center has rooms built around

Pods, they want clear sight lines for one Administrator to see everything. The school system will reevaluate the current Blair site and English Manor.

The students in the English Manor area are bused to Barnsley and it is over capacity. The kids want to go back to their own school. The English Manor neighborhood is changing and more children are moving in. All elementary schools in the area are overcrowded.

The current Bus depot in Shady Grove was on County owned land. The County sold their Industrial land to a developer. They did not get enough to relocate the Bus Depot. An option would be to keep the buses at the High Schools and the County has offered to maintain them at the county bus maintenance yard. The Ewing Center, off Avery Road, is not a good location for a Bus Depot. The Superintendent is to decide about February 3rd.

Marc Elrich started school in 1961. He was a teacher until 8 years ago.

Test Scores in schools – problem was focus on scores, helping only the students on the edge of getting a proficient score (52% - 89% = proficient).

Changing the bell times at schools by one hour would cost \$16M for buses.

Kemp Mill – school buses to be used by religious schools when not being used for public school.

Ike's budget comes out in a few weeks. May or may not include a tax increase to fund a \$17M school, cuts in mental health services, etc.

Marc feels a hard line on small tax increases is less important than avoiding cutting services severely. Localities can't walk away from problems and have to cover needed services. At the low point of the recession, Ike had to consider cutting senior feeding programs (\$25K), the county had used all reserves and had to borrow from school reserves.

Marc hopes people will write to their elected officials about Budget issues with their thoughts on cutting services vs. more taxes and where to draw the line.

Steven Fuller, George Mason Univ. Economist performed a forecast for Council of Governments. Area has recovered number of jobs that were lost. Area has not recovered income that was lost. Increases are in Local Government, Health Care and Management. No sector is breaking out as engine for future growth.

The County had a study done for LifeSciVillage and it showed no one would need to be near the FDA. The FDA White Oak is not the Center that people apply to.

Montgomery County has gotten rid of its Light Industrial land and Marc thinks we should look at making light industry welcome.

Marc invites all to contact him with their concerns.

The next Glenmont Exchange meeting will be held on Monday, February 23, 2015

Minutes submitted by Dorinda Danneman, Secretary.