

Glenmont Exchange, Inc.
GlenmontExchange.com

Minutes of the April 22, 2019 meeting

Attendees included Josh Goodman, Ian Rothman, Dorinda Danneman, Arquilla Ridgell, John Bogasky, Ilene Aiken, Ernie Benjamin, Vaughn Stewart and Sophia Heimbrock.

The minutes were approved. The Treasurer's Report was approved. This year's reported revenue of \$185 should be increased by the \$20 received today, to \$205.

Vaughn Stewart, one of our three District 19 Delegates, has just finished his first session in the Maryland House of Delegates. Vaughn is a Derwood resident, full-time delegate and full-time father. He got his first choice of Committee membership. He is on the Environment and Transportation Committee, also the Environment Subcommittee and Transportation Subcommittee.

The Speaker of the House passed away on the next to last day of the session. There is no obvious candidate to replace him. Three candidates are running and the election will be held on May 1, 2019.

Vaughn sponsored 7 bills this session (out of his 25 ideas) and two of them passed.

The first bill, about pedestrian safety, passed with bipartisan support and was co-sponsored by D18 (Kensington). Montgomery County, and our area of Montgomery County, has a concentration of pedestrian incidents. This bill increases the fine for hitting a pedestrian in a crosswalk from a maximum of \$500. Revenue is allotted to a newly created SHA Pedestrian Safety Fund. Vaughn plans to revisit pedestrian safety each session to add new charges to the bill. The new Fund will remove SHA's excuses for not spending on Pedestrian safety, and provide opportunities for increased public education about pedestrian safety.

The second bill addresses pollution sources around the Chesapeake Bay. Farming is now the largest source of pollution, and the #1 source is chicken manure. Maryland has a regulatory system already, but some are not in compliance. This bill provides stronger regulation and stronger enforcement. It may be vetoed by the Governor, if so, Vaughn expects to be able to pass it in the next session.

The school construction bill did not pass, but a downpayment on the Kerwin Committee recommendations for education was approved. Additional revenue sources will be needed to fully fund education.

The bill to allow local school board's to determine their own calendar was vetoed by the Governor and the veto was overridden in session.

The \$15 minimum wage bill, fully effective by 2025, was passed, vetoed and the veto overridden.

A bill requiring 50% of Maryland Utility's energy sources to be renewable by 2035 was passed.

The Governor's plan to widen I-270 has proceeded to the Board of Public Works. Vaughn had a bill that would have required Private/Government partnership projects to have an enhanced environmental review. It did not pass. Vaughn would like to know more about the financial feasibility and environmental effects of this project.

Finding a balance between Transportation, Housing and the Environment is difficult. Attendees discussed the merits of widening I-495, the American Legion Bridge, the possibility of a second Potomac River crossing.

Veirs Mill Road reconstruction will provide new access lanes and narrower main lanes. Driving speed is based in part on how the road feels. Structural changes – narrower lanes, curb extensions and new paint – may reduce speed.

Pedestrian safety – the SHA adjusts signage periodically. They have not been putting fines on signage because fines change. Issue is how to get people to not incur the fines. Could signage with posted fines be requested in new crosswalks?

It is difficult to determine who to contact when asking for changes in traffic signals on state roads. SHA locates the traffic signals and Montgomery County is responsible for the timing of the signals, but no one seems to be responsive to requests for changes.

Autonomous vehicles in Maryland – there is still a lot to work out. They would need to be secure from hacking. They are not a panacea to solve immediate traffic problems.

It's hard to make a case for more school money in our area, even though Montgomery County needs funding, and the east side of the county needs even more funding. Vaughn sees increasing the size of the pie as a possible strategy. He does not expect a broad increase in income taxes for education, new sources of funding would be needed. Vaughn thinks turnover of ownership in older neighborhoods is driving the increase of students in some areas. There may be a moratorium on new housing because of overcrowding in some schools.

The Kerwin Commission was a statewide commission composed of Teachers, Parents and Educators. They considered what policies it would take to make Maryland the #1 state in education, and also, how much it would cost. The cost estimates have been delayed. The proposals include universal Pre-K for every 4 year old, and means-tested Pre-K for 3 year olds. It would provide wraparound services – healthcare for kids, services for parents and teacher pay increases. It is a Utopian set of recommendations, looking at the social and political context of education.

There is a boundary study for school boundaries in Montgomery County. It was started by a student member of the School Board. Some schools are not serving students that live close to them.

Need to better focus development near Metro Stations. Need to be deliberate about where we put growth. Some areas have only single family zoning near the Metro. More sprawl and traffic congestion makes it harder to get ahead. The state has historically had no role in these decisions.

Vaughn distributes the “Stewart Sentinel” newsletter. His legislative aide, Sophia Heimbrock, may attend some of our meetings. Vaughn can be contacted at Vaughn.Stewart@house.state.md.us.

The next Glenmont Exchange Meeting will be Wednesday, May 29, 2019 at 7:30 pm in the Poplar Run Clubhouse, 13500 Stargazer Place, Silver Spring, MD 20906

Minutes submitted by Dorinda Danneman, Secretary.