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Your voice in the community

FEBRUARY 2016

A free publication serving Owings Mills, Pikesville, Randallstown, Reisterstown, Windsor Mill, Woodlawn and Catonsville

In the End, Superintendent Dance Gets Another 4 Years

A line had formed outside the Baltimore County Board of Education's Greenwood headquarters in a light snow, well before the scheduled start of a Jan. 12 public hearing called by the school board to solicit public comment on Superintendent S. Dallas Dance's performance as head of Maryland's third largest school system.

Dozens had signed up to testify and every seat in the room was taken, with the overflow room also full. At 7 p.m., board chair Charles McDaniels convened the hearing and announced that speakers had three minutes. Then, one by one, parents, teachers, elected officials and students came to the mic to express their thoughts on the board's pre-determined agenda topics—Dance's contract renewal, the district's fiscal year 2017 budget plan and the proposed policy of when to close schools due to extreme heat.

In the end, on Feb. 2, the board voted 10-2 to reappoint Dance to a new contract.

In his remarks, Dance stated that he was excited to continue the Blueprint 2.0 strategic plan in order each student gets a globally competitive education. "Blueprint 2.0 talks about a very bold theory of action that students have to be given access to an effective digital environment and learn a second language by prior to graduation," he said. "We cannot waiver from that commitment. Philosophically, we may disagree about how we might in fact get to that end result. The goal has to remain the same because we have to make sure every kid gets there."

Overwhelmingly, the most of the speakers' comments were about Dance's contract renewal and overwhelming the comments were positive. (Read some of the comments on page 19).

The elected officials in attendance—Del. Dana Stein of District 11 and Councilmen Tom Quirk of District 1 and Julian Jones of District 4—praised Dance for his



Students, such as a Liam Asher, a 6-grader at Pikesville Middle School, and Emma Whatley, were among those who spoke about the digital instruction system.

"WE CAN [GET TO OUR END RESULT] WITHOUT BEING MEAN, MEAN-SPIRITED, HATEFUL OR DISRESPECTFUL TO ONE ANOTHER. OUR KIDS ARE WATCHING HOW WE TREAT EACH OTHER."

—DALLAS DANCE

responsiveness to constituent issues, investment in technology and vision, as outlined in Blueprint 2.0.

The events leading up to the hearing began on Sept. 1, when Dance told the board that he would like to remain in his job. He asked the board to let him know by the end of November if they did not intend to renew his four-year contract, which expires in June 2016. In response, the board put the issue to a public hearing.

That decision was controversial since it appeared this was the first time the board scheduled a hearing for this purpose. Some questioned whether this approach would be the protocol for all future superintendents whose

continued on page 19



From the Publisher, Kenneth Brown

Yes, Indeed. Dallas Dance Deserves Another Four Years

Greetings once again, from the *Northwest Voice*! I am excited to reconnect with the community. You may know that the newspaper initially launched in January 2005, and after four years of an enjoyable run, we suspended publication. Like the *Northwest Voice*, most of our advertisers were small businesses. The economic crisis that hit in 2008 was devastating to many of us. But you take stock and find ways to rebuild.

AN UNINFORMED COMMUNITY WILL ALWAYS BE AN UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY.

The Voice returned in 2014 to print a special political edition in time for the gubernatorial general election. We thought it was essential that people understood the impact of the redistricting that changed the boundaries for legislative District 10 and created a new District 44B, and know a little about the candidates running in these districts. After much thought, we decided that it was important that we return to a regular monthly schedule in the new year.

We understand that we are bucking a trend. At a time when print publications all over the country have gone under and are going under, I am certain there is still a need for community newspapers. The community thought so too. A number of people, including community leaders and elected officials, wanted to know when the Northwest Voice was “coming back.”

You may wonder why I have a special interest in northwest Baltimore County. It’s because I care about this community and the people who live here. I have been a part of it for nearly four decades. I have lived in Woodlawn, Pikesville, Reisterstown and Owings Mills and I spend a lot of time traveling throughout the county, talking to people, attending meetings, trying to keep up with what’s going on. As you may have heard me say before, an informed community is an empowered community.

Keeping abreast of national and international affairs is important, but what’s happening in our backyard is what counts the most. That is, what our local politicians are doing, how our schools are performing, etc. It bothers me when something

important is going on inside the community and I hear someone say they didn’t know about it. The strength of a community is decided by how informed it is, and how effective and resonant are residents’ voices.

Conversely, an uninformed community will always be an underserved community. Trust me, there are plenty of people with business interests and political interests who operate on the premise that the community will be ignorant to what’s going on.

Our mission is to inform, educate, entertain, inspire and celebrate. We will share the news and information we are aware of, and we hope you will do the same. Be sure to pick up a copy of the Northwest Voice at one of the many drop-off locations, such as at senior centers, libraries and eateries. This time around, we will also be online at nwvoicenews.com. So, visit us often for updates.

The cover story of this February issue is on Baltimore County Schools Superintendent S. Dallas Dance. Let me say that yes, I am a supporter of Dr. Dance. I am pleased that his contract was renewed at the Feb. 2 board meeting.

Education should be focus for all of us, whether we have children or grandchildren in the school system or not. I am not new to the education circles in Baltimore County. I had three daughters go to BCPS and the system served them well. In the 90s, I was a PTA president, I chaired the county’s Northwest Area Education Advisory Council, and I personally interacted with three superintendents—Robert Dubel, Stu Berger and Joe Hairston. There were debates and controversies, as well as accomplishments and successes associated with each of them.

I believe Dr. Dance has done an impressive job. For example, according to Maryland Report Card, BCPS’s four-year graduation rate in 2011 for all high school students was 82 percent and 80 percent for African-American students. In 2014, the average graduation rate increased to 88 percent for all students and 87 percent for African-American students.

I can only begin to imagine what kind of world is waiting for our students. When we look at the technology that’s changed the world—World Wide Web is 27 years old, Facebook is 12 years old and Google is 17 years—and try to imagine where we will be in another five to 10 years. Our students must be prepared to adapt.

I recognize that a lot of folks are afraid of change. But we should keep in mind that Dr. Dance

was brought here not to maintain the status quo, but to move the system forward. Let’s get out of his way and let him do just that.

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VOICE
Your voice in the community

The *Northwest Voice* is a privately-owned community newspaper founded in 2005 to inform, entertain and inspire, as well as share news of interest to the northwest Baltimore County communities of Owings Mills, Pikesville, Randallstown, Reisterstown, Woodlawn, Windsor Mill and Catonsville.

Readers are welcome to comment and respond to articles. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and length, as well as to publish them online, in print or not at all. Anonymous letters or those that cannot be verified will not be published. The opinions of readers and guest columnists are not necessarily the opinions of the *Northwest Voice*. Unsolicited material will not be returned.

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PHOTO CREDIT CHARLES SYDNOR III

President Obama condemned religious intolerance in his remarks at the Islamic Society of Baltimore in Catonsville.

President Obama Comes to Catonsville Mosque

In his seven years in office, President Barack Obama had not visited a mosque in the U.S. When he made the decision to do so, the mosque he selected, from the more than 2,100 across the country, was one just outside of Windsor Mill.

On Feb. 3, the President arrived before noon at the Islamic Society of Baltimore, located off Rolling Road, to deliver remarks to a group of Muslim Americans, elected officials and other invited guests.

Sen. Shirley Nathan-Pulliam, Delegates Charles Sydnor III and Pat Young of legislative District 44B; and Tom Quirk, District 2 councilman, were among the attendees. A small group, including area residents and a Muslim family from Philadelphia, waited outside the mosque's gates for a glimpse of the President, but had to settle for a view of his motorcade.

Inside, President Obama began his 43-minute speech by thanking Muslim Americans "for serving your community, for lifting up the lives of your neighbors and for keeping us united and strong as one American family."

He acknowledged their fear as Americans about the threat of terrorism and their concerns about being blamed and targeted for the terrorist acts of a few.

Acknowledging that Christians, Mormons, Catholics and Jews have also been attacked throughout our history, President Obama said, "If we're serious about freedom of religion, we have to understand that an attack on one faith is an attack on all our faiths."

He added, "We have to be consistent in condemning hateful rhetoric and violence against everyone, and that includes Muslims here in the United States of America."

"None of us can be silent. We can't be bystanders to bigotry. We have to show that America truly protects all faiths."



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Looking for Money to Attend College?

The cost of college continues to rise, so those planning to attend should consider all the available options for financial support.

The Maryland Higher Education Commission administers a number of need-based grants, career- and occupation-based grants and scholarships, e.g. those for firefighters, and financial aid programs for unique populations such as homeless youth and students with disabilities.

Among these aid packages are the Delegate and Senatorial Scholarships. The state of Maryland provides funds for state legislators to award scholarships. The minimum a delegate can

award is \$200 and the recipient must reapply to have the award renewed. The minimum senatorial award is \$400 and maximum is \$10,100 and is automatically renewable.

Current high school seniors and undergraduate and graduate students who are Maryland residents and are seeking a degree at a Maryland school may apply. There are

provisions if your major is not available at an in-state school. You must first complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application by March 1. (See the related FAFSA story elsewhere on this page).

To see the list and eligibility criteria, visit mhec.state.md.us and look in the financial aid resources section. Contact your legislators for more information about their application process.



February 14 is Valentine's Day.

Do something kind for a loved one or neighbor.

FAFSA the First Step to Financial Aid

For just about every application for financial aid for college, a career school or graduate program, you must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also known as FAFSA. The application for the 2016-2017 school year was released Jan. 1.

The form contains more than 100 questions and asks for income and federal tax information and about the colleges you're interested in attending.

Don't assume that you or parents make too much money or that you must have a certain grade point average. Apply anyway and let the Federal Student Aid, an office of the U.S. Department of Education, make its determination. Read the application carefully and complete it thoroughly and truthfully. There's no need to pay anyone to process it for you and beware of the scams.

Most importantly, take note of the deadlines for the scholarships you're interested in and complete the FAFSA as soon as possible at fafsa.gov. Maryland's deadline is midnight on March 1. Remember that you have to fill out the FAFSA every year you're in school to stay eligible for federal aid.

After your FAFSA is processed, you get an expected family contribution (EFC), which the college uses to determine how much aid you can receive.

For more information about federal student aid, visit <https://studentaid.ed.gov>.

Maryland Orthodontic Specialists

Maxine Clark's solo practice specializes in orthodontic and dentofacial orthopedic treatment. She received her D.D.S. degree from Howard University College of Dentistry and a general certificate from the U.S. Army where she earned an achievement medal. With over 25 years of orthodontic care, Dr. Clark has contributed to the awareness of the importance of good oral health, as well as serving on the delegation to the American Association of Orthodontists and mentoring high school students interested in the field of dentistry.



Maxine V. Clark
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Grants Available for Transfer Students

The Maryland Higher Education Commission is accepting applications for the new 2+2 Transfer Scholarship, which is designed to help transfer students from Maryland community colleges to attend a 4-year institution in Maryland.

Applicants must submit the 2+2 Transfer Scholarship application by Aug. 31 for the 2016-2017 school year, complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) online at fafsa.gov by March 1, submit an official college transcript reflecting that he or she has earned an associate's degree from a community college in the state, and submit documentation the student, if applicable, has registered with the selective service system.

All majors are eligible. The annual grant award amount will be \$1,000, except for a student who enrolls in a science, teaching, engineering, computer science,



mathematics or nursing program, the award amount will be \$2,000.

The scholarship may be used for tuition and mandatory fees for three years of study or six semesters of study, whichever is longer.

For details on the application process and full eligibility requirements, visit the Maryland Higher Education Commission website at mhec.state.md.us/financialAid/descriptions.asp. Email osfamail@mhec.state.md.us with questions.

College Assistance For Teen Parents

The Generation Hope Scholar Program provides teen parents who are attending two and four-year colleges in Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia with emotional and financial support to help them complete college, pursue a successful career, and create a stable and productive environment for themselves and for their children.

Generation Hope is accepting 2016-2017 applications for its Scholar Program. The program is

supporting 65 young parents who will comprise the organization's next class. Teen mothers and teen fathers who are attending, or will attend, college in the Washington, D.C., metro area beginning Fall 2016 are eligible to apply. The deadline for applications is Friday, April 1, 2016.

Teen parents who are accepted into the program receive mentoring, tuition assistance, fun activities for them and their children, access to free tutoring, life skills, career preparedness and more.

For an application and more information, visit supportgenerationhope.org/scholar-application/



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New School Board President

Charles McDaniels Jr., a longtime resident of Lochearn, has been elected chair of the Board of Education of Baltimore County during its annual election of officers on Dec. 1. He replaces outgoing chair David Uhfelder.

In a statement McDaniels noted the “unprecedented turnover” in Board members in 2015 and said that he wants the board to be an example of “how to handle and respect differences of opinion while being inclusive, transparent, and effective.”



He added that he looks forward to the new emergency wants the board to “more effectively partner with our community organizations and leaders in the educational process.”

McDaniels was appointed to the board in 2011 to represent the fourth council district, and served as vice chair for the past year. He is a steel sales and technical consultant.

Upcoming Board of Education Meetings

Feb. 16, 2016	6:30 p.m.
March 1, 2016	7 p.m.
March 15, 2016	6:30 p.m.
April 19, 2016	7 p.m.
May 10, 2016	7 p.m.
May 24, 2016	6:30 p.m.
June 14, 2016	7 p.m.
July 12, 2016	7 p.m.
Aug. 9, 2016	7 p.m.

All Board of Education meetings will be held on the Greenwood Campus, ESS building, Room 114.

The public hearing on the fiscal 2018 capital budget will be held May 25, 7 p.m. at Greenwood.

View minutes, board members, and other information http://www.bcps.org/board/current_year_schedule.html. Check back on the Baltimore County Public Schools site for any changes.



Scholars K-8, Baltimore County's only public charter school, will not close after the end of the school year. The school is located in a business park on Whitehead Road in Woodlawn.

Woodlawn School to Close at End of Year

The Baltimore County Board of Education has voted to close the county's first and only public charter school at the end of the current school year. Scholars K-8 School, which first opened in 2008 as Imagine Discovery Public Charter School with a lot of excitement and promise, will not have its lease renewed for the 2016-17 school year. About 400 students are currently enrolled.

After county and state representatives expressed concerns about a steady decline in enrollment

and underperforming test scores, the organization running the program, Imagine Discovery LLC, decided to let its charter expire at the end of the 2013-2014 school year. However, the school board voted to continue to assume full operation of the school as a public school and it was renamed Scholars K-8. The school board extended the facility's lease for two years so the Baltimore County Public Schools administration could continue to evaluate the school's viability. That lease ends in June 2016.

BCPS reported in October 2015 that “After reviewing the age and condition of the building, enrollment trends, transportation, student relocation, educational programs, and the impact on the community, and after having carefully examined the educational benefit to students, Baltimore County Public Schools Superintendent S. Dallas Dance recommended that the school be closed.”

Northwest Voice Calendar of Events



We'll publish your community meetings and free events in our online calendar at no charge. Submit the details to nwvoicenews.com or email editor@nwvoicenews.com. Please submit at least 30 days prior to your event and allow 7 days for publication.

First Black Woman Fire Lieutenant

Twana Allen, a 14-year veteran of the Baltimore County Fire Department who works out of the Randallstown station, has climbed the ladder to become the first African-American woman to attain the rank of fire lieutenant.

Though she was promoted in October, she was officially sworn in to the position as part of a ceremony held in November at the Randallstown Community Center recognizing some 78 other fire and EMS personnel who earned promotions. County Executive Kevin Kamenetz and Fire Chief John Hohman presided over the ceremony.

A native of New Jersey, Fire Lieutenant Allen began her career as a first responder as a volunteer at the Woodlawn Volunteer Fire Company. In 2001, she then became an EMT at Station 18, Randallstown, and was promoted to paramedic the following year. In 2009 she became a fire specialist.

Twenty percent of county fire department's sworn members are women – well above the national average, according to Baltimore County. Minorities also make up 20 percent of the department.



Twana Allen began her career at the Woodlawn Volunteer Fire Company.

Citizens Police Academy

Police officers have a tough job and if you want to learn about how and why they respond to various situations in a particular way, consider applying to participate in the 15-week Citizens' Police Academy. The 35th class is scheduled for March 3 through June 9, 2016 on Thursdays from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. and Saturday from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. The 16th class, a Saturday date, will be announced.

Among the topics covered are CSI and forensics, narcotics and criminal investigations, and use of force and shooting policy. Attendees will also have the opportunity to learn about the many facets of the criminal justice system, techniques used in addressing crime in our community, and the challenges and demands associated with law enforcement.

To apply and for more information, visit <http://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/agencies/police/community/citizensacademy.html>

EMS Service Expanded at Woodlawn, Pikesville

Emergency medical service has been expanded at the Woodlawn and Pikesville Fire Departments and two other stations where demand for emergency medical calls is especially high, according to the Baltimore County Fire Department.

Four ambulances were added to enhance service during peak evening hours and will operate from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., Monday through Friday. The other medics are located at the Golden Ring and Middle River fire stations.

EMS calls account for the overwhelming majority of Fire Department responses. In 2014, the county Fire Department responded to 91,521 EMS incidents, out of 126,686 total incidents.

"Every Baltimore County citizen deserves to know that trained EMTs and paramedics will be there to help when he or she needs it," Fire Chief John Hohman said in a statement. "The demand for EMS service continues to grow, and we recognize the need to grow with it."

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Back in Session

Delegates and Senators returned to Annapolis on Jan. 13 for the 436th session of the Maryland General Assembly to consider hundreds of bills and review the operating and capital budgets for the State of Maryland. While much of the first day was ceremonial, lawmakers soon began getting down to business.

Northwest Baltimore County includes District 10, which covers Reisterstown, Owings Mills, Randallstown and Woodlawn; District 11, which covers Owings Mills and Pikesville; and District 44B, which covers Windsor Mill, Woodlawn and Catonsville.

This year, lawmakers have indicated that their legislative priorities include bills to limit antibiotics use; enhance protections and benefits for the elderly; foster children and military veterans; and improve public and health care policy, financing for affordable housing and the juvenile justice system. Legislators also intend to introduce bond bills to provide funding for the Morning Star Baptist Church Life Center in Woodlawn, Jemicy School in Owings Mills and other construction projects.

Be an informed citizen

How can you become an informed citizen on the legislative session? Go to the Maryland General Assembly website at mgaleg.maryland.gov. Click around on the various tabs and links, e.g. “legislators” to find the contact info for the Senators and Delegates and what bills they are introducing and co-sponsoring; “committees,” to find out when the various committees are meeting; and “home” for the summary and status of the bills.



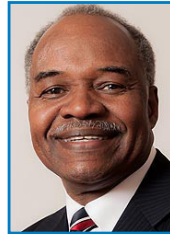
Top: The Maryland General Assembly convened on Jan. 13 for the 2016 legislative session. Above, from left: Del. Jay Jalisi, Del. Adrienne Jones, Del. Ben Brooks and Sen. Shirley Nathan-Pulliam, Sen. Shirley Nathan-Pulliam and County Executive Kevin Kamenetz. Left: Del. Clarence Lam and Del. Dan Morhaim.

Maryland State Legislators

DISTRICT 10



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Del. Ben Brooks
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Del. Terri Hill
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Del. Clarence Lam
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DISTRICT 44B



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Del. Charles Sydnor III
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Del. Pat Young
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2016 KEY DATES OF INTEREST

Feb. 3 The Governor will deliver his State of the State address

Feb. 5 Last day for Senate bills to be introduced without being first being referred to the Senate Rules Committee

Feb. 12 Last day for House bills to be introduced without first going to the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee

March 15 Each chamber reports their own bills by this date

March 21 Each chamber sends the bills it intends to pass favorably to the opposite chamber

April 4 The deadline for the budget bills

April 11 Legislative session adjourns

May 11 Final date for an extended session, if needed

More information

To learn about the budget, view hearings and keep track of bills, visit mgaleg.maryland.gov.

District 44 Night Feb. 17 6 - 8 p.m.

Miller Senate Office Building West I and II
11 Bladen St.
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You must bring a photo ID.

To RSVP and for bus information, contact shirley.nathan.pulliam@senate.state.md.us or 410-841-3612.

The Year in Review: 2015 Highlights

Last year's news featured political flaps about air conditioning in county schools, tugs of war over development and reduced funding for education. Take a step back into time, just the past year, to review some of the more significant happenings affecting the northwest.

Changing of the Guard

Maryland's 2015 legislative session, which began in January of that year, ushered in a new era of government under Gov. Larry Hogan, as well as new lawmakers representing new District 44B. Sen. Shirley Nathan-Pulliam, a five-term delegate who had previously represented District 10, and newcomers Delegates Charles Sydnor III and Pat Young won election in the newly drawn territory, which covers Catonsville, Windsor Mill and Woodlawn. In the redrawn District 10, first-term Delegates Ben Brooks and Jay Jalisi won election and joined veterans Sen. Delores Kelley and Del. Adrienne Jones.

On a local level, Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz returned to office for a second term. In the contest for County Council, newcomer Julian Jones won on his second try for the District 4 seat. Tom Quirk of District 1 and Vicki Almond of District 2 returned for another term on the council.



New Shopping Options Ahead

A fight between elected officials and developers about commercial development on Reisterstown Road got resolved and Foundry Row began taking shape on the former Solo Cup factory in Owings Mills. Set to open in September 2016, Wegmans is to be one of the first stores to come to the \$140 million project.

Final Sale at Macy's

Who would have thought that Macy's would finally lock its doors at the once-affluent Owings Mills Mall location? Shoppers grabbed the last of the merchandise before Thanksgiving. The mall, which had been dying a slow death for years, had closed the entrances to the inside weeks prior. J.C. Penney remains for now. Watch for more changes and development to the mall.

Nearby Choices, Competition

Not far away off Painters Mill Road, Metro Centre is making progress. Local branches of the Community College of Baltimore County and public library, which opened in 2013, have been joined by eateries. The mixed-use transit-oriented project, in proximity to the subway station, is also leasing an apartment building, as well as retail and office space.



A New School House

The county's newest school, Lyons Mills Elementary, opened in Owings Mills in August, in time for the current academic year. The \$31.3 million school was constructed to relieve overcrowding in the northwest and can seat 700 students.



New Test, Disappointing Scores

The results are in for the state's newest test for students, Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC). And they were not good across-the-board, including for Baltimore County students. While most acknowledge disappointment, calling the scores abysmal, most tried to stay positive by considering them a baseline with lots of opportunity for improvement.

Police Body Cameras

Baltimore County Police announced in September that the department is implementing a program to equip its 1,435 officers with body cameras. The first 150 will begin wearing them in July 2016, with the remainder of the force to receive the body cameras the following July.



Prepared for Protests

Baltimore County Police responded to reports that Baltimore City protests over the Freddie Gray death were going to move to locations in the county, such as Security Square Mall.



PHOTO CREDIT BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

More School Construction

Baltimore County Public Schools broke ground for two Catonsville-area elementary schools to relieve overcrowding in the southwest. Catonsville Elementary and Westowne Elementary will be replaced with a new building and Westchester Elementary will get a new classroom addition.

Is the Red Line Dead?

The Hogan Administration put the kibosh on the 14.1 mile light rail project when the Governor announced in July he would not provide State funding, in effect, making it dead. The line would have run from Social Security Administration in Woodlawn to Johns Hopkins Bayview Medical Center in east Baltimore.



Looking Ahead in 2016

Looking ahead, let's keep our eyes on what impact is being made on our schools, community and government. Get updates at nwvoicenews.com.

Preparing the Community

Among the political clubs and organizations preparing citizens for the legislative session were the Tenth District Democratic Club, District 44B Political Club and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority.

More than 60 community leaders and elected officials attended the District 44B Democratic Club meet and greet, held Jan. 8 at Monagan's Pub in Gwynn Oak. Club president Aaron Barnett encouraged the group to be "proactive not reactive" in issues impacting the community.

At the District 10 club meeting, held Dec. 17 at the Randallstown Community Center and chaired by Sen. Delores Kelley, elected officials gave updates and state legislators explained some of the bills they will introduce during the Maryland General Assembly in Annapolis and encouraged the community to be active in the process. Among those attending were: Delegates Ben Brooks and Adrienne Jones of District 10, Sen. Shirley Nathan-Pulliam and Del. Charles Sydnor III of District 44B, and District 4 Councilman Julian Jones.

Among those giving reports at the 44B Political Club meeting were: Sen. Shirley Nathan-Pulliam and Delegates Charles Sydnor III and Pat Young of District 44B, District 4 Councilman Julian Jones and Margaret Stokes representing District 1 Councilman Tom Quirk. Former delegate Emmett Burns, the organization's vice president and former councilman Kenneth Oliver, also were present.

At the community town hall sponsored by Delta's Baltimore County alumnae chapter (BCAC) on Dec. 9 at the Randallstown Community Center,



Aaron Barnett (center), president of the District 44B Political Club, waits to respond to Sen. Shirley Nathan-Pulliam's remarks as Delegates Pat Young (left) and Charles Sydnor III look on.

several legislators participated in a panel discussion on legislative issues. There was a demonstration of the new voting machines that will be used in upcoming presidential and congressional elections. In addition to Jerilyn Reed, president of the Delta's county chapter, representatives from the Governor's office, County Executive's office and Baltimore County NAACP also spoke.

Social Security Administration Set For Reno

After years of its headquarters being located in Washington, D.C., and Baltimore City, Social Security Administration consolidated and moved in 1960 to a newly constructed complex in Woodlawn. Thanks to funds set aside in the federal budget, the agency's main operations building will get its first major renovation since that move.

U.S. Sen. Barbara Mikulski announced on Jan. 5 that \$150 million has been allocated to modernize the 10-story Altmeyer Building. The funds, she said, will address health and safety issues, meet current accessibility standards, improve space utilization and provide a comfortable, energy efficient working environment that meets 21st century standards.

The project will also lead to construction jobs, Mikulski stated in a press conference, and it will generate economic development in the corridor that is home to the Social Security Administration, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. She referred to the Woodlawn area as a "wonderful neighborhood and wonderful community."

"This significant investment ensures that Baltimore County remains home to the Social Security Administration for decades to come," County Executive Kevin Kamenetz said in thanking Mikulski.

The Social Security Administration is Baltimore County's largest employer, with 11,000 employees working on the complex off Security Boulevard.

Community Tobacco Education Grants

The Baltimore County Department of Health, Bureau of Behavioral Health offers education and prevention grant opportunities.

Community, youth and faith-based organizations are encouraged to apply (PDF) for funding, up to \$4,000, to conduct a tobacco education or prevention program in Baltimore County. The health department intends to disburse 10 or more grants to applicants whose proposal best meets the needs of the county. All programs must be completed by June 30, 2016. Schools are not eligible to apply for this funding.

Keep abreast of grant opportunities at baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/health/resources/grants.html

GOT NEWS?



Submit your news item or press release for consideration. Deadline is the 18th of the preceding month of issue publication. Remember to include details on the 5 Ws

(who, what where, why and when). Submit the details to nwvoicenews.com or email editor@nwvoicenews.com.

Historic Winters Lane Homes to be Restored

Baltimore County adds to its affordable housing stock with the restoration of 10 homes in the Winters Lane community, a historically African-American community in Catonsville settled by freed slaves after the Civil War.

The \$2.8 million project will restore the interiors and exteriors of five duplex residences that are more than 100 years old and now functionally obsolete.

“With the restoration of these homes, we take a substantial first step in revitalizing and preserving this historic African-American community and add to our inventory of affordable housing,” said Baltimore County Executive Kevin Kamenetz.

The homes are owned by St. Ambrose Housing Aid Center Inc., a nonprofit with the mission of maintaining equal housing for low- to moderate-income people.

The houses, on Shipley and Robert avenues in Catonsville, will be updated to meet current building codes, expand and modernize living spaces and restore the exteriors. The work will maintain the historic character and architecture of the buildings, meeting requirements of the Maryland Historic Trust.

“We’re pleased and proud that these historic homes will be restored in the Winters Lane community. They are an important part of the character and heritage of greater Catonsville,” said Councilman Tom Quirk.



Ten Civil War-era homes in the Winters Lane community of Catonsville will be restored as part of a \$2.8 million project.

Baltimore County is supporting the project with more than \$1 million in economic development funds. Additional funding comes from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) loans and grants and a recently awarded \$250,000 Community Legacy grant from the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development.

—Baltimore County Government

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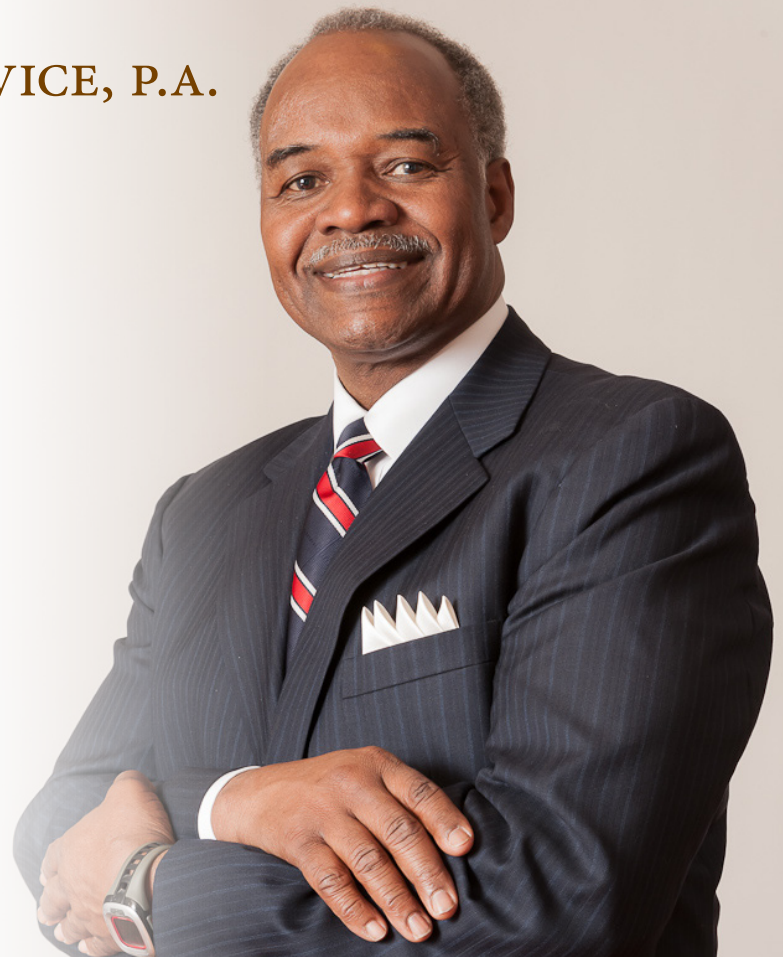
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Ready, Set, File Your Taxes

by Benjamin Brooks Jr.

With the end of the holiday season and the Super Bowl set, we all know the next rite of passage towards May flowers is not just April showers, but also answering the call from Uncle Sam. And, while it is never too early to start tax planning sometimes it is not until we are shoveling out of that first major snow storm of the new year that we remember to start the daily lookout for our local mailman.

Below are a few items of note to consider as you gather all of your documents for the upcoming tax year.

Federal tax items of note

Filing Date. Due to the celebration of Emancipation Day, which celebrates the signing of the Compensation Emancipation Act by Abraham Lincoln in Washington, D.C., the tax-filing deadline for tax year 2015 has shifted to April 18, 2016. This filing date applies to the state of Maryland as well.

Identity theft. As our world becomes increasingly connected the potential for electronic crime has also increased. Filing taxes electronically is no different. And, while the Internal Revenue Service is continuously introducing new safeguards to help defend against such intrusions, it is important for us as taxpayers to do our part. There are many interesting and insightful articles worthy of a quick Google search regarding this topic. But for a few quick points, we suggest the following:

- Safeguard and treat personal information such as your name, Social Security number and address like cash.
- Remember that the IRS will initially contact a taxpayer by mail only. Therefore, any other type of correspondence, e.g.

by email or phone, should be considered suspicious.

- Consider filing your returns early in the season in order to prevent somebody else from using your information to file a false return prior to your filing.

If you do believe your identity has been stolen the following link has resources you should consult irs.gov/uac/Newsroom/IRS-Identity-Theft-Victim-Assistance-How-It-Works

In the event that link does not work go to: irs.gov/, choose the Protect your ID tab and choose the second link For Victims of ID theft.

IRA Deductions (Traditional).

A great way to contribute to your retirement while receiving a potential tax savings is through the use of an Individual Retirement Account, or IRA. The limit on the contribution to this type of account for 2015 is \$5,500 (\$6,500 if you are over the age of 50). Furthermore, contributions to your Traditional IRA are allowed until the

tax filing deadline day. Therefore, a taxpayer can contribute money to his or her 2015 IRA until April 18, 2016 and receive credit against the 2015 tax year. Please be advised that your contribution to a Traditional IRA may be subject to certain limitations based on income levels, marital status and other case specific circumstances. As such, one should consult a tax professional and consider their own circumstances to determine the total tax consequence of contributing to this type of account.

IRA Deductions (Roth).

In addition to the Traditional IRA, some taxpayers may prefer to contribute to a Roth IRA instead. A Roth IRA is subject to the same contribution limits as its counterpart the Traditional IRA for 2015 (\$5,500 or \$6,500 if you are over the age of 50) and filing deadline (April 18, 2016), but the taxability of subsequent distributions are treated differently than a Traditional IRA. Another noteworthy difference between the two options is the fact that deductions

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for a Roth IRA cannot be deducted from your income. There are additional differences between the differing IRA options which are best discussed with your tax professional.

State of Maryland tax items of note

Pension Exclusion. Residents of the state of Maryland will be glad to hear that the maximum pension exclusion for 2015 has increased from \$29,000 to \$29,200. The pension exclusion is available to taxpayers (or spouses) who are 65 and older and taxpayers (or spouses) totally and permanently disabled.

Sec 529 Plans. The state of Maryland, like many other states, offers Sec 529 plans. A Sec 529 plan provides tax advantages among other benefits designed to assist a taxpayer in saving for college for a specified beneficiary. Specifically, the earnings from investing in a Sec 529 plan will not be subject to state tax, if used for qualified educational expenses. Additionally, taxpayers who invest in a Maryland College Investment Plan or Maryland Broker-Dealer

College Investment Plan can receive up to \$2,500 per account holder per beneficiary subtraction from income in the year for which the contribution is made.

Taxpayers should consult a tax professional to consider gift tax implications, plan contribution limitations and to properly define qualified educational expenses among other relevant variables to determine whether or not contributing to a Sec 529 plan is the best decision for you.

Ultimately, much like a typical Maryland winter forecast the tax laws are fluid, always changing and ever evolving. Staying organized, aware and consulting the right resources should help us to navigate our journey towards April 15--make that April 18.

For more information on tax filing, e.g. about the Affordable Care Act, visit irs.gov.

Ben Brooks Jr. is an accountant, B&R Brooks Professional Tax Service



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COMMENTARY

The Glover Report: From Sandtown to Randallstown

Part I: The Inter-relationship of Baltimore City and Baltimore County

by Doni Glover

Northwest Voice publisher Kenny Brown and I have had many lengthy discussions on the inter-relationship and inter-dependence of the city and the county. Although I am a Sandtown resident and homeowner and have lived most of my life inside the beltway, I have plenty of family in the Randallstown and Owings Mills parts of Baltimore County.

For over 35 years, consequently, I have spent a many a night out Liberty Road. It is a getaway for me, although the nights are very quiet. Instead of the nuisances of people on the corner and the wildlife associated with the city, like rats, the county is plagued by bunny rabbits, foxes and deer—a welcome reprieve for an urbanite like me.

While the city certainly has its issues, so does the county. Further, it is

no secret that many county residents too have city roots. The Liberty Road exodus has been witnessed ever since integration: people leaving the city and its challenges to move to higher ground with better neighborhoods and schools.

Who doesn't want that for their child? No one can argue against such a move. However, in the process of blacks flooding Northwest Baltimore County primarily from West Baltimore for these improved living conditions, communities like mine suffer.

Some refer to it as "urban flight". I see it as "brain drain," whereby the only black people left in these communities are those who cannot afford to leave and those of us who are just too in love with urban living.

One thing that becomes interesting to me is that while blacks are breaking their necks to pay



The state's demolition of dilapidated and vacant houses in the Sandtown Winchester area began Jan. 5 with the Governor and Baltimore City Mayor's announcement of the revitalization initiative, Creating Opportunities for Renewal and Enterprise (CORE) on Jan. 5.

county mortgages, a swarm of white folks are hovering over communities like Harlem Park and Washington Village, buying up vacant, and now calling these communities home.

So, my question becomes: Should Baltimore County care about what goes on in the city? Even more, do black folks in the county have any responsibility for what goes on in the city and should they even care?

I ask because on many occasions I have heard people in my circle speak ill of the city. There is this condescending perspective that reeks of a deep disdain for anything associated with the city. It's as if the city is full of criminals – a sort of "den of ill repute." The only ones impressed with city living are their children who have fleeting memories of visiting grandma's house down in the city.

As for the adults, quite often the decision was made long ago to disassociate with the city – except maybe for the family church. Others have completely transitioned and want no dealings with the city at

all – which I think is a very bad idea. Recently, Gov. Larry Hogan announced some \$600 million coming to Baltimore City under the management of the Stadium Authority to deal with blight. When I shared the news on social media, there were a lot of comments about the blocks of vacants considered for razing. Black people were disgusted that these neighborhoods, like the 1000 block of North Stricker, are being demolished.

There is an innate fear, I might add, of gentrification. However, if county folks have no interest in buying these vacants and transforming them, then why, I figure, should they complain that the houses are being torn down or that white folks are working to develop these properties – maybe even into condos —condos that few blacks will buy?

How can we complain about what others are doing when we have no interest in preserving the communities out of which we come? (To be continued ...)

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Instagram.com/bmorenews
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Monitor Crime in Your Community



Baltimore County's second homicide of the year took place in Owings Mills, and its third in Catonsville. The Police Department reported that a double shooting took place on Jan. 7 in Lower Gate Court. One man died and another was seriously wounded.

A 20-year-old man died at the hospital after being shot on Jan. 8 in the Pike Park Plaza South Shopping Center in the 6500 block of Baltimore National Pike in Catonsville, Police say. Both suspects have been apprehended.

To view the Baltimore County Police Department's crime reports for your area, visit the Baltimore County government website at baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/police/precinctsgeneral/precinctsall.html for

- Woodlawn Precinct 2
- Franklin Precinct 3
- Pikesville Precinct 4

For a more specific crime report for a community, go to baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/police/crimestats and follow the instructions to access the interactive mapping service.

Source: baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/police/



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Another grocery store bites the dust

The weekend before Food Lion closed one of its Randallstown locations, shoppers filed in taking advantage of 50 to 75 percent discounts of slim pickings left on the shelves and freezers.

An anchor to the Kings Point Square Shopping Center at Marriottsville and Liberty roads, the supermarket closed its doors on Jan. 19 after a sell-off of goods.

One shopper, who says she spent \$237 one Saturday on snack, diapers and other items during the closing sale, lamented the closing, which was convenient to her Randallstown home.

"I took full advantage of the closing sale. I have a few mouths to feed," said the mother of four. "However, the circumstances behind the sale are unfortunate. To see a community staple eliminated without an alternative...it's just a shame. A lot of the residents that live on this end of Liberty Road [9900 block] don't have cars and heavily depended on this Food Lion. So, now what...what's going to fill the void?"

With two other locations, each three miles away, she's since visited the Owings Mills location where

she says she say some of the same employees who rung her up at the Kings Point store.

According to County Councilman Julian Jones, who represents District 4, employees will be offered jobs at other Food Lion stores. He noted that trends affecting food stores across the nation, such as competition from non-traditional stores selling groceries, e.g. Walmart, dollar stores and drug stores; and consolidation of stores from mergers and underperformance.

"It should be noted that the Belgium-based Delhaize Group, owner of Food Lion, is scheduled to merge with Royal Ahold [owner of Giant, Martin's and Stop and Shop], in a proposed \$29 billion merger scheduled for mid 2016," Jones stated in a letter to constituents. "These mergers usually result in consolidations resulting in store closings."

Super Fresh and Food King closed their Woodlawn stores a few years ago and have since been replaced with other supermarkets. Last year the Baltimore-based Mars Supermarket closed four stores in Maryland, including its Rolling Road location in Windsor Mill.



Shoppers catch some last-minute bargains before Food Lion in the 9900 block of Liberty Road in Randallstown shut its doors.

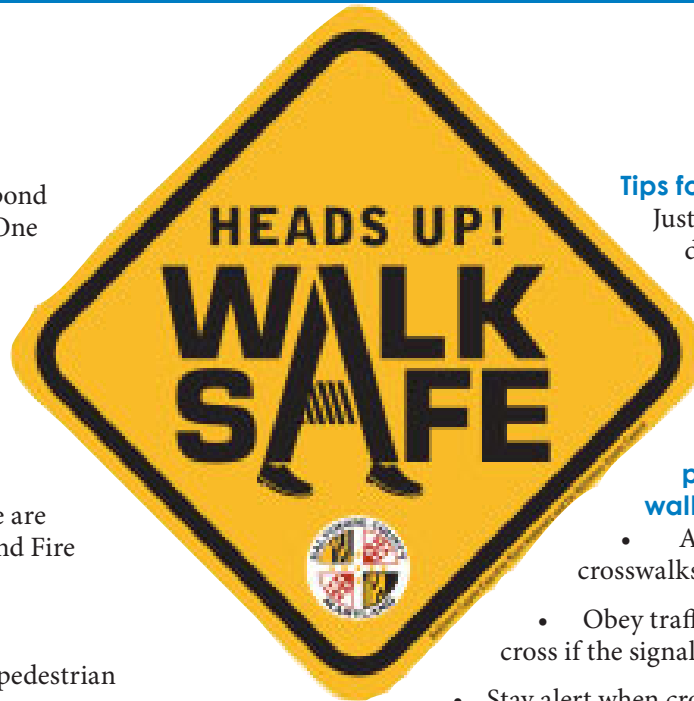
Pedestrian Tips

The Baltimore County Fire and Police Departments respond to more than 400 pedestrian-vehicle crashes each year. One of the most recent pedestrian fatalities in the northwest took place on Dec. 27 in Owings Mills when a 16-year Milford Mill high school student, Tyree Nathan Brown of Windsor Mill, was struck by a car while crossing Lakeside Boulevard. Last fall, on Security Boulevard near Gwynn Oak in Windsor, a vehicle hit a 56-year-old woman who was crossing the street, but according to police, not doing so in a crosswalk. A man was injured in the same accident. Recognizing that there are misconceptions about pedestrian accidents, the Police and Fire Department offered these facts:

How Pedestrians Can Avoid Injury

- 80 percent of pedestrian crashes are the fault of the pedestrian
- 60 percent of pedestrians killed are adults over age 40
- Every day someone is hurt or killed crossing the street in Baltimore County

The Walk Safe campaign aims to educate citizens on the traffic laws that apply to pedestrians, and the specific dangers associated with crossing illegally or while distracted. The following resources will help you avoid injury as a pedestrian, and make the roads safer for pedestrians when you're driving.



Tips for Walking Safely

Just as drivers are expected to avoid distractions, it's important for pedestrians to do the same. Time of day is also an important factor in these crashes, as the majority of pedestrian crashes happen between 3 and 10 p.m.

Here are a few simple safety precautions you can take while walking:

- Always cross at traffic lights, marked crosswalks or intersections.
- Obey traffic signals at all times. Don't attempt to cross if the signal tells you to stop.
- Stay alert when crossing. Even when the signal says WALK, you should check that the path is clear.
- Try to make eye contact with drivers before stepping off the curb.
- Walk on the sidewalk whenever possible. If there is no sidewalk, walk on the side of the road, facing traffic.
- Wear bright or reflective clothing at night.
- Avoid distraction when crossing. Turn off headphones and put away your cell phone before crossing

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The Law

- At an intersection, a pedestrian is subject to all traffic control signals.

If a pedestrian crosses a roadway at any point other than in a marked crosswalk or in an unmarked crosswalk at an intersection, the pedestrian shall yield the right-of-way to any vehicle approaching on the roadway.

Laws for Motorists Around Pedestrians

- The driver of a vehicle must stop for a pedestrian at crosswalks and intersections without signals when the pedestrian is on the half of the roadway on which the vehicle is traveling OR the pedestrian is approaching within one lane of the half of the roadway on which the vehicle is traveling.
- The driver of a vehicle must stop for a pedestrian at intersections with signals.
- When proceeding on a green signal, drivers turning right or left shall yield the right of way to pedestrians lawfully within the crosswalk.

When turning right on red after stopping, drivers shall yield the right of way to pedestrians lawfully within the crosswalk.

For more details about the law regarding pedestrians and motorists, resources and other information, visit baltimorecountymd.gov/Agencies/fire/safety_education/walksafe.html

—Baltimore County Fire Department

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Jasmine Wilson, a student at Windsor Mill Middle School, offered comments at the Jan. 12 Board of Education meeting in favor of Superintendent Dallas Dance's S.T.A.T. technology initiative with the support of her family. From left mother Adrian Martin, grandfather Johnny Martin and sister Ashley Wilson.

Superintendent had a lot of support, *continued from cover*

contracts were up for renewal or was this situation specific to Dance.

Over the course of Dance's tenure, key issues that have gotten attention have included the plan to get central air conditioning into all schools, a change to an 8-period school day, and a technology initiative called S.T.A.T. (Students and Teachers Accessing Tomorrow).

Much of the comments centered around S.T.A.T. Parents, students and teachers acknowledged experiencing some fits and starts, but reported more pros than cons and many engaged students.

The few who opposed the board granting Dance another four years complained that he

lacked accountability, teaching experience and a willingness to hear the views of those who did not agree with him.

In comments about the budget, Bill Brown, a father of a 3-year-old son diagnosed with autism, whose development has progressed under the Infants and Toddlers program, urged the board to ensure that funds allocated for special needs students were used for that purpose. Others advocated that the heat index that the board should use to determine if schools should close schools should be five to 10 degrees lower than the proposed 95 degrees.

School Board Testimony: What They Said

Dozens testified at the Board of Education, held Jan. 12 in the Greenwood hearing on whether they supported a renewal of Superintendent Dallas Dance's contract. The remarks from teachers, parents, students and elected officials were overwhelmingly positive. Below are excerpts of some of the public testimony.

Emmanuel Andre Teacher, Owings Mills High

The work we have done since Dr. Dance has come on board has been amazing.



Wendy Flowers Parent

Dr. Dance has not demonstrated a willingness to dialogue with stakeholder groups that have dissenting voices...I believe there are far more pressing budget line items that could use money from a STAT slowdown to achieve some real impact on student learning and workplace environment, for example portable air conditioning units.

Sheri Gordan Summit Park PTA President

Last spring parents at Summit Park came before you to talk about the severe overcrowding



at our school ... At that time we made several requests to help us better fit into our school in the short term. We appreciate the learning cottages and the safety cameras. We value the efforts and support, the hard work, guidance and dedication of Dr. Dance, Marisol Johnson and the entire board in front of me. Thank you and we support Dr. Dance's contract renewal. However, we're here to advocate for a long-term fix to the overcrowding issue [140 percent overcapacity].

Marisol Johnson Board of Education Member

As a parent of 4 children currently enrolled in BCPS from the ages of 6 to 16, and a graduate of Dulaney High School, I have been able to experience the changes in BCPS first hand.

I'm not willing for my first grader to miss out on cutting edge technology, differentiated learning styles and the ever-important interpersonal connection that they still and will continue to have with their teachers simply because some people don't understand the need for spending money today to invest in our students tomorrow, or because they are OK spending money to help a certain group of people or a certain community that rallies together and has means to do so.



In my opinion, it is in part because they do not like the young black superintendent who sits in front of us who is in a position of power to change this county. But I say bravo to Dr. Dance for envisioning a future where all of our students graduate with dual languages, and are truly ready for college and career and to compete in a global market outside of Baltimore County.

Rachel Parren Parent, Cockeysville Middle

What is first and foremost on my mind is the fact that we are even here having a meeting to discuss the superintendent's contract renewal. I have to wonder whether this has been done before and what is it about Dr. Dance's accomplishments in the short time that he's been here that dictate such a precedent. I am truly curious as to how this became a debatable issue.

I believe that my son will not experience the barriers to graduation that other black and brown boys have experienced. Dr. Dance's commitment to narrowing the achievement gap between white and minority students is a breath of fresh air and quite frankly a much-needed direction for Baltimore County.



Cassia Parson

Pikesville PTSA President

Due to your vision, Dr. Dance has made incredible changes to the school via renovation, staff changes and new programs, such as the Lighthouse.

Dana Stein

State Delegate, District 11

Speaking on behalf of District 11 legislators, we feel Baltimore County Public Schools has made significant strides under Dr. Dance's leadership, such as improved technology, Blueprint 2.0, engaging parents and community leaders in developing a five-year strategic plan and improved communication with elected officials and other stakeholder groups.

Jasmine Wilson

Student, Windsor Mill Middle

In short, the S.T.A.T. provides the tools and resources for students to be able to live in our world today. If the S.T.A.T. initiative were to slow down, by the time I graduate Baltimore County Public Schools, I would have missed five years of technology exposure and skills. If the S.T.A.T. initiative is cut, all students in BCPS would lack the technology exposure and skills. We would be left behind and we'd be left out. We would not have the tools to be citizens in our world. And for these reasons I ask that you renew Dr. Dance's contract.



Shopping for a Home?

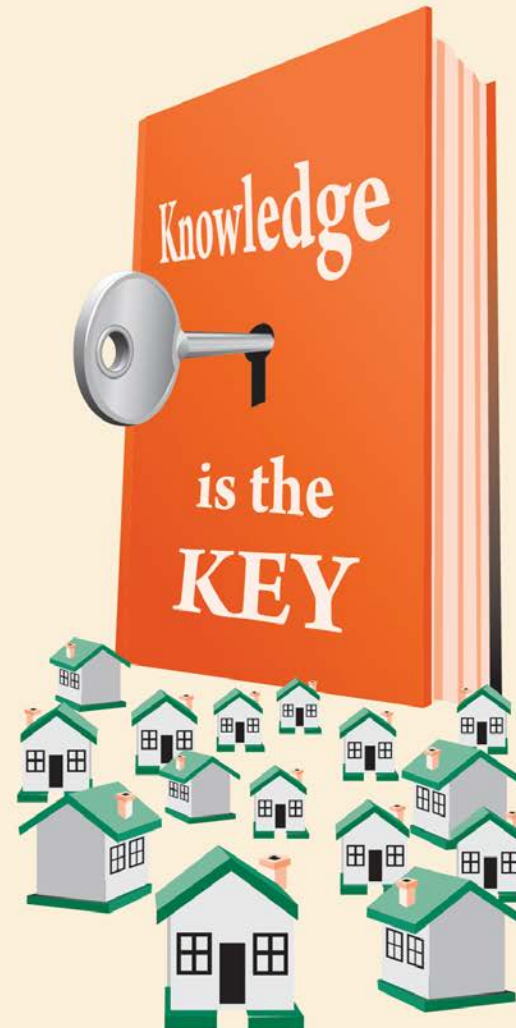


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