



**THE FOREST HILL COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD**  
**Minutes**

January 28, 2020

Advent Lutheran Church, 2230 Rock Spring Road, Forest Hill

**Members & Representatives in Attendance**

Bernie Schweigman – Chairperson

Thom Ellenbecker - Secretary

Nancy Reynolds

Daniel Sekowski

Larry Richardson – Policy Director for Office of the County Executive Barry Glassman

Tracy Penman – Captain, Northern Precinct, Harford County Sheriff's Office

Len Parrish – Director, Harford County Department of Community & Economic Development

**Minutes**

Meeting was called to order by Bernie Schweigman at 7:05 pm.

Minutes prepared from the November Meeting by Cathy Ohler were read-in by Thom Ellenbecker and accepted.

A crime report for Forest Hill was presented by Captain Penman for the period of January 2019 to January 2020.

- Thefts from vehicles are an area of focus. Arrests were made 10 days ago based upon footage from doorbell cameras around the area that pointed to 2 individuals for whom search and arrest warrants were issued. Still, this is a crime of opportunity and others will also attempt. Recommendation is to continue locking vehicles.
- Northern precinct deputies were fired upon last week in Street, Maryland when responding to a domestic incident. It was estimated that 200 rounds were fired at deputies, 2 of whom were pinned down for a period of time until the county's tactical vehicle could be used to help retrieve them. No deputies injured but a neighbor was shot. The assailant was taken into custody after running out of ammunition.

Guest Speaker Len Parrish, Director, Harford County Office of Community & Economic Development, provided an overview of this department.

- Department responsible for investing in the quality of life of Harford County residents focusing on the areas of Economic Development, Housing, Tourism and Transit.
- See the latest Harford County Growth Report for further info:  
<https://www.harfordcountymd.gov/2595/Here-We-Grow>
- Economic Development:
  - Economic development includes promoting Harford County's Bonds to ratings companies, justifying purpose, value and payback to minimize the costs of our loans.

- Harford county is the 2<sup>nd</sup>(tied)-fastest growing county in Maryland with unemployment rates lower than the rest of the state.
- Workforce: 45% of the counties 137k working residents currently commute to jobs outside the county while 20k workers commute from elsewhere to work in the county; 21k people work at our largest employer, APG, which is 5x more than the number of people working at our 2<sup>nd</sup> largest employer, Upper Chesapeake Medical Center. Overall, Harford County businesses are largely aligned within Defense Technology, Transportation/Warehouse (I-95 corridor), Medical and Retail industries.
- Our workforce is well educated and trained (93% high school diplomas, 34% bachelor's degrees), drawing upon 25 colleges in a 50-mile radius of the county, Harford Community College, Harford County Public Schools. Other programs like on veteran / workforce training grants and loans are available to employers.
- Economic Development seeks to help attract, establish and incubate new businesses in Harford County with an eye toward filling vacant office and retail spaces (now back down to a more reasonable 10-12% office vacancy rate; currently waiting on Sears to sell back to Harford Mall's management company) before new construction with new construction directed toward containment within the inverted-T of the county's 14,000 acre Enterprise Zone (Forest Hill is the northern tip). TheGroundFloor is a business incubation and startup center with an eye toward helping bringing the innovation of nearby APG out to the local county.
- Economic Development also has an eye toward assuring the viability and sustainability of local agriculture and farming industry. This includes Home Grown Harford promotions and awareness campaigns. The new Grove agricultural center (under construction – Street, MD) will serve as an agri-business incubator allowing local farmers and crafts people to sell homegrown and handmade products directly to consumers.
- Tourism:
  - Tourism investments focuses upon driving bed nights at local hotels, yielding tax revenue for the county. Current estimates are that the tourism yields \$1M/day for the county's hotels and restaurants.
  - Will be accepting tourism funding applications for FY21 beginning in Feb 2020 with an application deadline in March 2020.
- Transit:
  - Forest Hill elderly and special needs residents have access to the county's demand-response transit services for transportation to medical appointments and care centers. To make a reservations (can be done up to 90 days in advance), purchase vouchers or for more information - 410-838-2562 or 410-612-1620
  - Harford transit's launched new schedules and routes in January focusing on more reliable and shorter wait times. The main emphasis of these changes was to connecting workers to jobs.
  - A new tracking app, RouteShout 2.0, is now available to see where your bus is and when it will arrive. <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/1959/RouteShout>

- Investments in 13 new buses and the construction of new bus shelters are underway largely funded through MTA & Federal grants
- Developing a regular route to include Forest Hill is not in near-term goals and any viability needs to be studied:
  - What would interest and ridership be for a loop that may start/stop at the Bel Air Courthouse, come up 924/Rock Spring, over to Hickory and down 543 or Conowingo?
  - Does it need to go farther and connect with Fallston/Joppa or Churchville routes?
- Housing:
  - Goals include providing affordable housing opportunities for low to moderate income residents of Harford County.
  - Harford County is currently reviewing housing needs, goals and plans as required to access federal funds.
    - A survey of county needs is open to residents as a part of the mandated process.
    - Since Forest Hill is largely a residential community on the northern end of the economic zone our voice is of interest. Please take the survey at: [http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/244/Housing-Community-Development?fbclid=IwAR3rx0O\\_PufAz-df6wW\\_2TSprzLyCKwiGX\\_SbpFfpHpBO9Kth4gTP0m7bGO](http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/244/Housing-Community-Development?fbclid=IwAR3rx0O_PufAz-df6wW_2TSprzLyCKwiGX_SbpFfpHpBO9Kth4gTP0m7bGO)
    - A draft report is targeted for publishing in mid-March.

Reports from Agencies and Officials included the following notes:

- Larry Richardson
  - The new 2019 Harford County Annual Progress Report is now available at: <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/2135/Annual-Progress-Reports>
  - See the new Thrive! Harford County Growth report: <https://www.harfordcountymd.gov/2595/Here-We-Grow>
  - "Prepare Because you Care" - Free Harford County Emergency Preparedness Training
    - Next class: Wednesdays Feb 5 through 26<sup>th</sup> from 7-9pm.
    - Future classes will be posted at: <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/1721/Prepare-Because-You-Care>
  - The Grove Agricultural Center is under construction in Street MD. Those interested in selling locally grown or made products can see the new rules for the center and apply to participate at: <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/2799/The-Grove>
  - Department of Aging published resources for avoiding and responding to fraud: <http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/2772/Resources-for-Fraud>
  - The HCPS 2021 Proposed budget is now released: <https://www.hcps.org/boe/budget.aspx>
  - Next-up: County Executive comprehensive budget proposal incorporating the requirements for the County Departments and Agencies, HCPS and the Sheriff's office

- Proposals for future meetings:
  - Parks and Rec – Cathy Burley – Budget, Trail, Leagues
  - Census – Valez - <https://www.harfordcountymd.gov/2758/Census-2020>

Meeting adjourned by Chairperson Bernie Schweigman at 8:15PM

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, March 24, 2020 7:00PM at Advent Lutheran Church, 2230 Rock Spring Road, Forest Hill

Respectfully Submitted, Thom Ellenbecker

The Forest Hill Community Advisory Board is a forum for the area residents to inform the Office of the County Executive on matters of interest and/or concern within the Forest Hill community. This Board will host regularly scheduled public meetings that educate attending residents on local government services, plans and initiatives, along with various state agencies and other organizations. All meetings are open to the public. Resident involvement is critical to the success of this community board!

Forest Hill Community Advisory Board Members:

Bernard Schweigman II - Chairperson  
Thom Ellenbecker - Secretary  
Catherine Ohler  
Nancy Reynolds  
Elena Skittle-Watson  
Daniel Sekowski  
Steven Davids

Please see our web page at: <https://www.harfordcountymd.gov/2710/Forest-Hill>

Please also like the Forest Hill Community Advisory Board on Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/TheForestHillCommunityAdvisoryBoard/>