



**CROFTON CIVIC ASSOCIATION  
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP AND BOARD MEETING  
First Baptist Church, Crofton  
January 22, 2024 – 7:30 PM**

**Present:**

**Board Members:** Anna O’Kelly, Marsha Perry, Brian Riley, Renee Speer, Daria DeLizio, Charles See, Stephen Tull, and Hal Sheldon.

**Staff:** Martin H. Simon, James Harvey, Sgt. Jason Jett, Kathy Lavin, Tara Gottschalck.

President Anna O’Kelly opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Announcements by President Anna O’Kelly:**

Anna announced that this meeting is being recorded to assist the Administrative Assistant with the transcription of the minutes.

The Crofton Winter Farmers Market returns Saturday January 27<sup>th</sup> and February 10<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the Crofton Library. The winter market will continue every other Saturday through April 20. The market features local and regional foods, crafts, and artwork. See [Croftonfarmersmarket.com](http://Croftonfarmersmarket.com) for details.

January 28, 2024, 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM, Three Course Afternoon Tea, Historic Linthicum Walks, 2295 Davidsonville Road, Gambrills. Tickets \$35.

January 30, 2024, 6:00 PM, Zoom meeting regarding the rezoning application for three properties on Defense Highway near Staples Corner: 1361, 1365, and 1419 Defense Highway (between Langways Sports Bar and Family Vet Clinic). The property owner is seeking to rezone his property to Commercial C4 (currently C1, Small Business District). The login information can be found on the CCA website at [croftoncommunity.org](http://croftoncommunity.org).

The District 7 Budget Town Hall will be held on February 7th (rescheduled from January 9th), at 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM, Anne Arundel County Budget Town Hall with County Executive Stuart Pittman and Councilwoman Shannon Leadbetter, Southern High School Auditorium, 4400 Solomons Island Road, Harwood, MD. You may register to attend or speak by signing up at <https://www.aacounty.org/openarundel/yourbudget/budget-townhalls>.

The next CCA Board meeting will be Monday February 12<sup>th</sup> at the Crofton Elementary School Media Center at 7:00 PM.

Town Hall is closed Monday February 19, 2024, for President’s Day.

Anna announced the following free events at the Crofton Library, 1681 Riedel Road, Crofton:

February 2, 2024, 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, American Red Cross Blood Drive.

February 5, 19, and 26, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, AARP Income Tax Assistance for Seniors and Low- and Middle-Income Residents.

February 8, 2024, 7:00PM to 8:00 PM Crofton Library Concert featuring Doug Segree performing a blend of acoustic rock and pop music.

**Guest Speaker** – *Anna introduced guest speaker Steuart Pittman, County Executive, Anne Arundel County.*

County Executive Steuart Pittman provided an update on projects in the County. He announced that it is budget season and encouraged people to attend the Budget Town Halls.

He announced that police recruitment is down. The County is currently down 50 positions of the 800 authorized. They have increased pay and offer hiring bonuses to \$20,000. An internal reorganization of the department was announced today to provide more coverage for patrols due to this shortage.

He reported that while there have been increases in fire department recruitment, it is predicted that recruitment will be slowing down. There were 62 new recruits in the last class.

He spoke about his support for the Essential Worker Housing Access Act, a bill before the County Council. It would require new developments to have a certain percentage of housing allowed as workforce housing. There is a housing shortage at the state level. This bill would facilitate growth and development and help solve the shortage in our area.

He spoke about area environmental concerns. There are developers proposing things contrary to Plan 2040 or doing away with and changing the forest conservation laws so that more housing can be built. Managing growth in a way that protects the environment is his priority. He regularly meets with Senior Environmental Policy Advisor Erik Michelsen of DPW regarding upcoming comprehensive rezoning and ensuring spaces are protected. He is happy with the staffing at planning and zoning, stating they are more efficient and responsive to both individuals and community organizations.

He spoke on the difficulty of getting state funding for state roads and urged the Governor and Transportation Director not to slow down on the funding for Route 3 project. The state commissioned for the study of revenue on transportation, which will help with some projects this year.

He spoke on recreation and parks, and the large number of projects including the improvement of park facilities. There has been a high level of community engagement. These projects will be discussed at the upcoming Budget Town Hall.

He mentioned the rezoning meeting of the three properties on Route 450. He is hoping that Planning and Zoning will do the right thing.

### **Citizen Questions or Comments –**

A resident asked what the basis is for the property tax assessment change to file for an appeal. Mr. Pittman responded that it is SDAT who does this. He believes this is done by evaluating comparable properties in the area. Hal is a real estate appraiser and said she can contact the state to have it appraised, then if the assessment value is less than the appraised value, it will be brought down. This is done every three years. Martin added there were instructions on how to file an appeal included with the statement, and the deadline is soon. He added that he conducted an informational survey of the board members and determined the average increase of 15.5% which is 10 points behind the state average.

Bernie Nolan of Crofton Colony asked Mr. Pittman about the flooding issues of his development due to the developer, Toll Brothers, of the adjacent community, The Ridings, which did not follow storm water management regulations. He asked if the County is willing to protect them and their own \$7,000,000 million project downstream. Their properties are being washed away, and their retrofit plan is inadequate for the stormwater management that is necessary. He asked the County Executive if he can tell Toll Brothers to fix this. They will appeal with experts and evidence showing the inadequacy of the planned retrofit.

Mr. Pittman acknowledged the flooding concerns of Crofton Colony. Toll Brothers received permits but did not get the job done. The HOA is now in charge of the project and has agreed to the retrofit, so there is nothing more that can be done at this point. He commented further that according to his Senior Environmental Policy Advisor, Erik Michelsen, the flooding and retrofit is not a threat to the Golf Stream Watershed Restoration project. If the appeal brought by Crofton Colony is accepted, the next step would be to bring the HOA back to the table and revise the plan.

Martin commented on the Walk and Roll program, and the project to build and extend the sidewalk on Route 424 from Staples Corner to Bell Branch Park. He reported that the letter from the County to the Board was favorable to this project. Mr. Pittman also supports this project. James Kitchin added this project is part of a series of another larger project. Mr. Pittman suggested that attending the Budget Town Hall to express endorsement of this project would be helpful to ensure this project will get the support needed.

### **Budget Presentation – James Harvey, Comptroller**

Jim presented the FY25 budgets for the tax district and the CCA. Jim announced that the FY25 budgets were published in the December Advocate that was mailed to the community in late December. Editions of the Advocate are posted to our website and can be viewed at any time.

This budget period covers the fiscal year July 1 to June 30. He pointed out that the Bylaws allow the Board of Directors to approve a budget that is within +/- 4% of the previous year for expenditures. If the proposed budget falls outside of this range, then a meeting of at least 75 CCA members and an affirmative vote by a majority of voters at the meeting is required.

This board-approved budget shows a 3.2% increase in expenditures. The tax rate is 0.1%, an increase of 0.004% over FY24. The average annual cost per household in the tax district is \$383.24, or an increase of \$13.47 per household over last year.

Jim provided budget highlights; There was a 3.1% cost of living adjustment for CCA employees, and the introduction of a merit increase program for all staff, whereas in recent years merit increases were only budgeted for the police officers, as other staff had reached maximum tenure. The cost of workers' compensation and liability insurance significantly increased. There was an increase in expenditures for tree management, neighborhood grounds repairs, and technology.

The majority of income is from taxes collected by the County as part of property taxes. There was some money held over from the previous year held by county, less than \$1,000. The interest rates have greatly improved and we have earned approximately \$10,000 from money held in savings.

Money not used in the previous fiscal year is held and targeted for future use in the following year's budget, per County rules.

The revolving fund covers cash flow issues during July through December 15<sup>th</sup> when we receive money from the County.

Public Safety represents the highest portion of the budget. Maintenance & Operations covers grounds upkeep and maintenance, Recreation covers CCA events, with the smallest portion going to overhead.

The reserve funds are for future spending on things such as police vehicles, park equipment, and ADA compliancy.

The Civic Association has a separate budget as a 501(c)(4) community organization that is separated from district funds. These funds are used for things such as covenant enforcement. Income consists of donations, fundraising, and advertisements in the E-Advocate. The CCA also receives a grant for the summer concert series annually. Most of the income for the recreation program specific to this year is for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary events this year and fundraising for those events.

There is \$100,000 in additional CCA assets compared to last year, which is the money the County paid in exchange for the forest conservation easement for the front lawn property. This money now sits in a separate account earning interest. The Board has not yet decided what to do with this money and is accepting suggestions for improvements to Crofton's grounds and facilities from residents.

A resident asked what the retirement contributions are for staff. Jim responded that all employees receive a SEP (Simplified Employee Pension) which is a straight 14% contribution.

A resident asked about salaries for Town Hall administration. Town Hall 2022 to 2024 jumped over 19% and the Comptroller salary increased over 71%. Jim explained that both positions were vacant for most of the previous year, so the actual amounts shown are lower than if the positions were filled throughout the year. Anna added that the Town Manager salary was raised after Larry retired to be commensurate with salaries of the rest of the staff.

A resident asked about staff raises due to inflation. Jim explained that the COLA is set at 3.1%, which is lower than the COLA rate for Social Security and other sources of data. Additionally, there are merit increases up to 3% which the Board also votes on. Jim added there is a procedure for staff evaluations and merit increase recommendations at the discretion of the Town Manager and the Chief of Police. Renee added that all residents are welcome to attend the budget meetings that take place in October every year to learn more and to participate in the discussions that lead to the budget.

Renee added that operations are based on a policy and procedures manual that is in the process of being updated. Once revisions are completed it will be published on our website. Jim pointed out that the current document is severely outdated and has not been fully revised since 1996.

### **Approval of Minutes** –

The minutes from the CCA Board meeting held on December 11, 2023, require approval. There were no additional corrections or revisions needed for these previously distributed minutes. The minutes were filed.

### **Town Manager's Report** – *Martin H. Simon*

Martin reported on event planning for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. The largest fundraiser is the golf outing which is scheduled for May 20<sup>th</sup>. The fees are under negotiation and will likely be between \$125-\$150. The goal is to raise enough funds for the remaining 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events for the year. Sales will continue for ornaments, Crofton history books, tote bags, and greeting cards featuring the winners of the student art contest.

Martin reported on the status of the grants to improve Swann Park, Willows Park, and Hardy Field. The State granted \$350,000 for Swann Park and Willows Park. There was an additional grant from Rebuilding Together Anne Arundel County (RTAAC) which provides \$95,000 for all three parks, with a very small portion targeted for Hardy Field. Martin requested the grant be amended so the total \$95,000 can be used for Hardy Field. He has received official notice today that the amendment was granted, with an additional nine-month extension to complete the project.

Martin mentioned his survey of the property tax assessment he mentioned earlier. The purpose was to see if the increase is consistent with the assessable-base income we receive from the County. Historically it increases, except for 2021 and 2022. He asked if any residents wish to participate to obtain a broader sampling of the community. He only requires the percentage increase. Those interested can email him at Town Hall.

Martin mentioned the change of venue for upcoming Board meetings. Historically the Board of Directors meetings were held at Crofton Elementary School. Since the school shutdowns during and post Covid, we were no longer granted access. Recently the school has allowed access to outside organizations at a significant cost. Martin met with the school Principal and Board of Education staff who agreed to allow the CCA to host meetings on school grounds at no cost. Future Board meetings and our General Membership meeting and Board elections in May will be held at the school. The February 26<sup>th</sup> Fire Safety event will still be held at the First Baptist Church.

Martin provided the police overtime report for the month of December. There was 3 hours of regular overtime pay due to court appearances. There was 1.75 hours of regular overtime pay due to a late call over a shift. There was no special event overtime paid this month.

### **Comptroller's Report – James Harvey**

Jim reported the CSCBD finished the second quarter with \$807,701.55 in income and \$319,460.86 in expenses. This is a 7.9% increase over the forecasted income and 21.6% under the forecasted expenses. This is largely due to higher than budgeted interest earned on savings and a slightly higher percentage of tax revenue from the County's first installment that they paid last year. Salaries remain under budget due to the staff vacancy in the police department. Insurance premiums are higher than budgeted and have been addressed in FY25 budget planning. The annual commercial loan payment for the front property of \$236,233.51 is due on January 25<sup>th</sup>.

Jim is researching banking programs that increase security such as Positive Pay and Positive ACH, which are supported by Shore United. The Finance Committee decided that Positive Pay process was time consuming, and Jim will investigate the possibility of on-line periodic reconciliation of accounts.

Due to our advertising revenue, the CCA requires a long form tax form. He has found a company to handle this.

The rent-to-own lease is complete for our telephone system, which adds to our cost savings.

We have given our contractors who are not corporations 1099 tax forms. The state will require a family program where every employer must contribute to a mandatory family and medical leave program. It has been delayed until 2026. It is expected that a version of the short-term disability program, that we already provide staff, will cover this.

Jim provided an update on social media. The January E-Advocate went out recently. The read rate is at 66%. Facebook and Instagram accounts are up to date with frequent posts. Our email system has been updated to include verifications so that our messages are not identified as spam.

Jim provided an update on the Crofton 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary programs. The Student Art Show was last weekend at the Crofton Library. The kids were excited to see their artwork displayed. There were 70 to 80 people in attendance. The art will be on display until February 14<sup>th</sup>.

The Let's Move! Crofton Fitness Week program was successful. There were 400 participants who signed up. Several companies have extended their offers an additional week due to the bad weather.

The planning for the Golf Outing is in progress.

The Crofton Salutes Our Heroes program will be available soon. We will be erecting banners around the Parkway honoring veterans and service men and women. They will be going up the first week of May along the route of the CCA's Armed Forces/First Responders Parade.

The planning for the Taste of Crofton event sponsored by the Greater Crofton Chamber of Commerce is in progress, but it will not be held in February as planned.

Jim reported on CCA events. The Cherry Blossom Festival is scheduled for May 30<sup>th</sup>. The CCA Easter Egg Hunt is scheduled for the week before. If there is inclement weather, there is a possibility of both events running on the same day.

Jim and Martin will attend a Certified Emergency Response Training program in March. This will allow staff to participate in coordination with the AA County Office of Emergency Management should there be a disaster in the Crofton area.

## **Committee Reports**

### **Planning & Zoning** – *Marsha Perry*

Pat Huecker provided an update on three bills reviewed by the County Council.

Bill 78-23, the Essential Workforce Housing bill which created a process where developers would be required to set aside a percentage of units as workforce housing. The bill was defeated.

Bill 86-23 sponsored by the County Executive concerned redevelopment in the County. It provided incentives to developers to redevelop certain properties in a Critical Corridor Policy Area such as MD Route-3, an Economic Policy Area, a Town-Center Policy area, or a Transit-Oriented Overlay Policy Area. One provision of this bill would allow R15 or R20 uses in certain commercially zoned properties while requiring no commercial uses. Several parcels on Route 3 would qualify. The bill was defeated.

Bill 63-22 did pass. This was a rezoning of 1308 Defense Highway. This property obtained comprehensive rezoning in 2009 when the 11.5 acre parcel was reclassified from RA (one house) to R1 (1 unit per acre). In 2016 the parcel was sold to Crofton Management II LLC. The R1 zoning would have allowed the owner to build 11 units. In June 2022 the Council passed a bill that allowed R1 districts a maximum net density for adult independent dwelling units served by public water and sewer and located within a two-mile radius of an assisted living facility or a county owned and operated library or community center, would be 3 units per acre. The parcel is currently zoned as R3, and the density has been increased to 34 units. This would allow building adult independent dwelling units on the property without the necessity of a zoning change. This parcel requires the attention of the community. There is a subdivision that has been submitted with 37 units building up to Route 424. There is no project number assigned, so no additional information can be obtained. This is important because our region will not be able to speak against these comprehensive zoning concerns for a few years because of the GDP. This is unfair because the communities must wait but the variance requests do not.

Pat reported on the project on Route 3 North and St. Stephens Church Road. This project is owned by Gambrills Gateway. This project has been ongoing since 2019 and must have been granted time extensions. She is unable to obtain any information on this project from the Planning and Zoning office and has therefore filed a FOIA request for this project. She was notified that Planning and Zoning could not find anything on this project. There is no information on what is being built there.

**Public Safety Committee** – *Brian Riley*

Brian had nothing to report. He acknowledged Chief Jett's first public meeting as the Chief of Police of the Crofton Police Department. Jason Jett was officially promoted to Chief in December.

**Finance Committee** – *Renee Speer*

Renee mentioned that announcements regarding the 2024 Board of Directors election will be published in the upcoming newsletter. She mentioned the revision of the policy and procedures manual continues and will be published on the website once it is completed and legally reviewed.

**Recreation Committee** – *Daria DeLizio*

Daria had nothing to report.

**Greater Crofton Council Liaison** – *Chuck See*

Chuck reported the GCC had cancelled the January 9<sup>th</sup> meeting on crimes in Crofton. The January 16<sup>th</sup> meeting on Riedel Road Safety was also cancelled. These have not yet been rescheduled.

The next GCC meeting is scheduled for March 12<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM at the Waugh Chapel Community Center. Guest speakers are County Council representatives Julie Hummer, District 4, and Shannon Leadbetter, District 7.

**Covenant Review Committee** – *Stephen Tull*

Stephen had nothing to report.

**Maintenance and Operations** – *Rob Kendall*

Rob was not in attendance.

**Education Committee** – *Hal Sheldon*

Hal is still seeking volunteers to report on local school events.

Hal reported that Crofton High School's production of Mary Poppins is scheduled for March 8 through 17. All Anne Arundel County Schools will be closed from March 25 through April 1 for spring break.

**Police Chief Report** – *Sgt. Jason Jett, Acting Chief*

Chief Jett remarked on his gratitude to the CCA and the community for their support in the changes he has made under his command. He plans to continue to make improvements to the service the police department provides to the community.

He reported that the storm damage during the first two weeks of this month did not incur any major damage. There were a few trees down, and some localized power outages. He reminded residents to be mindful of icy roadways and sidewalks.

Chief Jett reported that this month and moving forward he has made additional changes to the statistical information report to capture additional data on service calls not previously provided. All police department statistics are published on the CCA website. He mentioned the following statistics captured in the last five months; Calls for service were 4,856, Patrol checks were 3,064, Traffic/Parking were 450, Crossing Guard detail was 244. He pointed out that service calls for 2022 totaled 3,063 for



the year, while the last five months of 2023 was 4,856, surpassing 2022 in less than half the year. He credits his hardworking staff for this significant increase in call responses.

Chief Jett reported he received notification from Thelma Swigert, Anne Arundel County Public Schools, that a second crossing guard will be added to Duke of Kent Drive and Crofton Parkway beginning on February 1. This will release Crofton officers from having to provide coverage for school crossings. Crofton Police will still cover shortages on an as needed basis.

Chief Jett reported that no serious crime has taken place in the community this month. They are seeing an uptick in uninsured motorists. He encouraged residents to ensure there are no lapses in their insurance coverage. Vehicles can be towed on the spot and citations for this violation can be substantial.

He reported that mental health crisis incidents are ongoing in the community. Crofton officers will be attending updated training from County police over the next few months to ensure the safety of the individuals involved and to provide assistance for those in need.

Chief Jett announced that he and Sgt. Sims, and Ofc. Gable will participate in the 2024 Polar Bear Plunge, which benefits the Maryland Special Olympics. There is a donation page linked from the Crofton Police Department Facebook page if anyone wishes to support this cause.

In closing Chief Jett encouraged residents to reach out to him with any questions or concerns. He is planning on having Coffee with the Chief meetings in the future.

Renee asked if number of calls indicates calls that otherwise go to county if Crofton police were not available. Chief Jett confirmed this and added that the staff has increased with two shifts which provides more coverage from when they were short staffed. He added that he is working on filling the current vacancy in the department.

### **Citizen Questions or Comments –**

A resident had concerns regarding large vehicles such as campers parked along Crofton Parkway. She was specifically concerned with two large recreational vehicles on Crofton Parkway close to Layton Street, after Knightsbridge Turn. It belongs to a renter. This is a serious safety concern because motorists are unable to see around those vehicles. Anna explained that the roads belong to the County so there isn't anything that can be done about it. Chief Jett added that he agrees that these vehicles should not be parked along the Parkway. He added that he is encouraged about an upcoming grant program that will provide the police with license plate readers that allow drive by scanning to determine if a vehicle's registration is up to date.

James Kitchin recommended contacting County Traffic Engineering who can add no parking signs for certain hours during the day in specifically targeted areas in the community of concern. He also mentioned that vehicles more than 10,000 pounds are not allowed to park on County roads.

A resident asked if a 72-hour parking rule can be implemented. He encouraged the Board and the police to speak to the County Executive about this. He has volunteered to form a committee. He believes there is something that can be done. Martin responded that he agrees and has been working

on this matter recently with County Councilwoman Shannon Leadbetter. She recommended that the CCA request Tax District only parking enforcement, and the area within the triangle would be separate from County enforcement. She brought the matter to her colleagues and there was no interest in supporting it. She recommended working with Nestor Flores, head of County Traffic Engineering. Martin is planning on meeting with him and the Chief to discuss options.

With no other questions or comments, the meeting was adjourned for an Executive Session to discuss Legal Matters.

*Meeting minutes completed by Tara Gottschalck, Administrative Assistant (February 8, 2024)*

MS/JH/JJ(tg)