

**CROFTON CIVIC ASSOCIATION  
BOARD and GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING  
First Baptist Church, Crofton  
January 17, 2022 – 7:30 PM**

**Present:**

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

**Staff:** Martin H. Simon, James Harvey, Chief Ear Fox, Sgt. Jason Jett, Cpl. John Sims, and Tara Gottschalck.

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

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

The Crofton Winter Farmer’s Market will begin on select Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM at St. Elizabeth Anne Seton Church on December January 21<sup>st</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup>. The market features dozens of local vendors and food trucks.

The Greater Crofton Chamber of Commerce will hold its annual Installation of Officers Mixer on January 19<sup>th</sup> from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the Walden Country Club.

The Crofton Kiwanis Club will host its Ledo Pizza Social on January 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM.

The next CCA Board meeting will be held on February 13<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 PM at the First Baptist Church.

Town Manager Martin H. Simon introduced special guests:

The Arrow of Light Cub Scout Pack 731, leader Aiden Surlis, Jr., was in attendance for their *Building a Better World* merit badge.

County Executive Steuart Pittman was in attendance as well as other newly elected public officials; Senator Dawn Gile, Delegate Stuart Schmidt, and Delegate Shannon Leadbetter.

Martin thanked County Executive Pittman for his help with the Enclave issue, for the infrastructure grant for the Village Green Association that will bring needed water to the facilities there, and his assistance with the County’s purchase of the easement on the front property and the planting of 1,600 trees at no cost to the community.

County Executive Pittman spoke about recent changes in the administration for this second term. Courtney Buiniskis is the new Community Engagement Officer for our area. Jeff Amoros is the Chief of Staff. Renesha Alphonso is the Director of Communications. James Kitchin is now the Director of Research and Special Initiatives. Christine Anderson is the Chief Administrative Officer. Janssen Evelyn and Jen Purcell are the Deputy Chief Administrative

Officers. Jenny Jarkowski is the new Director of Planning and Zoning beginning on January 19<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Pittman will serve as Master of Ceremonies at the new Governor's swearing in tomorrow.

Mr. Pittman announced upcoming Town Hall Budget meetings. The next meeting is for district 2, on January 18<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM, at Glen Burnie High School, with Councilwoman Allison Pickard. The district 4 meeting is scheduled for February 9<sup>th</sup> at Arundel High School with Councilwoman Julie Hummer. The district 7 meeting will be January 31<sup>st</sup> at Southern High School with Councilwoman Shannon Leadbetter.

Mr. Pittman spoke about the Route 3 corridor project. The MOU with the State has been signed. There is a good relationship with SHA. The 30% design plan meeting will take place in the fall. A letter was sent to the Governor's office outlining top ten requests for the new Transportation Secretary.

Mr. Pittman spoke on projects specific to Crofton. The process of purchasing the Easement for the front property will be completed soon. The County Forestry Conservation Department has planted 1600 trees.

The infrastructure grant was presented to the Village Green Associates for use in providing water to the businesses there. There was a delay in the shipping of the pipe, though it should be delivered soon. The water access will allow the opening of new restaurants.

The new West County Elementary School is scheduled to open in the fall of 2024. This will provide relief to overcrowded area schools.

Mr. Pittman spoke about the proposed area landfill and his administration's efforts to keep it out of the Two Rivers area. There is a two-pronged approach. The first is to prevent MDE from granting the permit to appeal the decision through the Office of Law since the County controls access. The other is to get the new MDE secretary to not sign it.

He spoke about the flooding concerns at Crofton Colony. The water from The Ridings which is the development across the road from it has not been controlled the way it was supposed to. The County has made several inspections and has installed thirty check dams in the area.

Citizen comments or questions:

A resident asked the County Executive to elaborate on the plans for Route 3. Mr. Pittman explained that an agreement with SHA has been signed, and phase one of the plan concentrates on the area of St. Stephens Church Road and Route 97, where three lanes go down to two. The design plan meeting will be this fall. The resident asked about the overdevelopment on Route 3. Mr. Pittman responded that any development is reviewed on a case-by-case basis. He also mentioned the area regional planning group meetings are coming up. This region is group 3.

Marsha asked about the new Planning and Zoning Director, and what her view is on granting modifications and variances. Mr. Pittman responded that he has discussed with her ways to improve the process. Marsha asked specifically about the recent the Supreme Court decision

giving EPA authority to sue small land areas for not following environmental policies. Mr. Pittman said he agrees that there should be no modifications to environmental laws.

A resident asked about the status of Johns Hopkins Home restoration project. Stuart Schmidt responded that the property has just established private ownership, and a Board of Directors has been established. James Kitchin continued that the County has given support with a grant that has enabled them to achieve ownership.

With no other questions, Martin introduced Dawn Gile, State Senator, District 33.

Senator Gile reported that since the election there is one senator and one delegate (Stuart Schmidt) for District 33B. Part of Crofton has been redistricted and added to District 21 who is represented by Senator Rosapepe, and three delegates. Constituents may go to the Mdelect.net website to determine who your representatives are and how to contact them.

Senator Gile introduced her staff members. Legislative Director Spencer Dixon, Chief of Staff Allison O'Brien, and Intern Emily Alisio. Senator Gile is assigned to the Finance Committee. This committee deals with subjects such as health occupations, cannabis, alcoholic beverages, financial institutions, banking, and insurance. She listed some of the top issues such as the conceal and carry legislation, the cannabis referendum that was passed, the family medical leave that was passed, and legislation for public schools. After the swearing in of the new Governor, there will be changes to priorities and the budget.

There is a legislative bond initiative for Crofton for new park equipment for \$350,000 to replace the current equipment at Swann Park and the park at The Willows. Delegate Schmidt will assist in helping to get this approved. The Senatorial Scholarship program is continuing. Current candidates do not need to re-apply. New candidates will be able to apply soon. Links are provided on the website. She encouraged people to sign up for the newsletter.

With no questions, Martin introduced Stuart Schmidt, the new Delegate for district 33.

Delegate Schmidt announced he has hired Angie Mattero as Chief of Staff. He is assigned to the Judiciary Committee. His Subcommittee assignment has not yet been given. He is working with Councilwoman Shannon Leadbetter on local crosswalk concerns such as the area of Crofton High School, areas of Riedel Road, and residents proposing a traffic light at Bell Branch Park and Davidsonville Road. He is also working with the County Executive on the Route 3 corridor. He commented on the playground and park improvements for the Crofton parks. There is a legislative bond initiative in progress to help fund this project. The pandemic has allowed us to see how much we need outdoor spaces. Delegate Schmidt encouraged the application of scholarships.

With no further questions, Martin introduced Jessica Ewing, Delegate Shannon Leadbetter's assistant since the councilwoman was in session. Jessica reported that their focus is on constituent services. She encouraged people to sign up for their newsletter.

With no further questions, Anna introduced CCA Comptroller Jim Harvey who presented the CSCBD and CCA FY24 Budgets.

Jim announced that the Budget was distributed in the December issue of the Advocate. Jim explained that the fiscal year runs from July 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30<sup>th</sup>. There was \$22,000 remaining from the previous year due to staff turnover. The budget has been increased by 3.29%. The CCA By-Laws states a 4% revision requires a vote. The COLA was raised to 5.9%. Money has been set aside for future needs such as new tasers, park equipment, vehicles, communications, and new recreation events.

Jim explained that the revolving accounts are established for funding in between payments for the County. The average overall tax cost per household is \$461.00. The tax rate has decreased from 0.1% to 0.0965%. The County calculation is based on the accessible base, which can change annually. This year the County withheld funds due to the lower bond, which was set to \$2,000,000. It has now been increased to 3,000,000. The revolving fund is at \$235,000.

Jim stated the audit this year was approved. The auditor recommended that overhead be separated out from expenses. In the past the expensed money was put into the reserves. A reserve plan for FY24 was created. This will include items such as vehicle replacement, equipment updates, park equipment upgrades, and IT upgrades.

Jim presented the CCA Budget. He explained that this budget is not funded by tax dollars. It uses donations, grants, and fundraising. The upcoming 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Crofton will use money from a golf outing fundraiser, and a grant for a teen go-cart event.

A resident asked about the leftover revenue of \$344,000 from FY22. Jim explained that we cannot plan an unrestricted fund. Money for next year's budgets must be either in expenses or reserves.

A resident asked about the \$16,000 tree fund. Anna clarified that this fund is for damaged trees in the community. Previously this expense came from the facilities and maintenance budget. It now has its own line item. This resident asked about the communications budget. Jim explained that things like Zoom was previously included in office supplies. There will be additional expenses with regards to the website redesign, and software updates. These expenses are now included in the communications budget.

A resident asked about the car allowance addition to this budget. Jim explained that this program was initiated as a recruitment tool for police officers. Other police departments allow take home vehicles for their officers. Since the expense does not allow this program for our department, the Board approved a \$150 per pay period car allowance for officers. This program was approved by the Board last year.

With no other questions, Anna requested the approval of meeting minutes from the CCA Board meeting of November 14, 2022, and December 12, 2022 that were distributed to the Board by email. No additional changes were requested. The minutes were filed as amended.

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

Martin reported that the Advocate was mailed to residents at the end of December. The repair of a sink hole in the common area of The Orchards has been completed. The construction materials were removed, and the hole has been back filled.

He reported that the removal of the dead trees on Crawford Boulevard has been reported to DPW. The tree that fell into the road has been removed.

Martin commented on the apprehension of the suspect involved in the recent home invasions. He thanked the resident who called Town Hall to report the suspect in the area. He thanked Anne Arundel County Police for their participation. Chief Fox will comment on this later.

A resident asked if more than one person was apprehended. Martin said to his knowledge it was one suspect, and that the Chief will comment further to the extent that he is legally able during his report.

**Comptroller's Report** – James Harvey

Jim presented the quarterly report.

There is a \$100,000 to \$150,000 salary surplus due to open positions.

Insurance costs about \$70,000 per year. Some workers were reclassified from municipal to clerical saving \$1,000 per year.

Town Hall staff has been moved to a time clock for time tracking and accountability. Punch Buddy is in use for the current pay period.

The policy manual review and revision are in progress. The completed first draft is being reviewed by the Town Manager. Jim asked if anyone with HR Policy experience wishes to review the changes to contact him. This has not been done in 30 years.

Jim reported on the move of the employee SEP IRA program from Invesco to Schwab. This will reduce costs and increase returns for employees.

New laptops were ordered for the Comptroller and the Administrative Assistant. There are backs up systems and ransomware software in operation now for Town Hall staff.

Our bond has been increased from \$2,000,000 to \$3,000,000, to avoid the withholding of funds from the County.

Jim reported on the police tasers. The software for current tasers will only be supported by the company through March, instead of early 2025. He received a quote for six tasers at \$15,369.00. This can be paid over five years with an annual payment of \$3,397.96. There are reserves available to do this within the current budget if we use the Police Equipment Fund. Jim suggested an early motion from the Board to release \$2,397.00 from the Police Equipment Fund. Brian motioned for the Board to release the funds from the Police Equipment Fund for the police tasers. Rob seconded the motion. A resident asked why we do not use the surplus funds. Jim explained that it would not be appropriate to use the salary surplus funds for police equipment. With no additional discussion, the Board voted unanimously to release the funds and the motion was carried.

**Committee Reports:****Planning and Zoning** – Marsha Perry

Marsha commented that it would be a good idea to invite the new head of Planning and Zoning, Jen Jarkowski, to our meetings. There has been a large amount of zoning modifications and variances granted in the past where environmental county codes were ignored. We would like to make sure this isn't the case moving forward.

Marsha asked James Kitchin to comment on the development of the Versa Tile showroom structure at Martha Greenleaf Drive. James Kitchin explained the background of the project. The preliminary plan from 2019 was denied by the department of Planning and Zoning due to the intermittent stream and wetlands that run through the property. The developer appealed the decision, and the County Board of Appeals overrode the decision from Planning and Zoning and granted the appeal in August of 2020. The developer received permission from MDE (Maryland Department of the Environment) to re-route the intermittent stream. The developer testified with their experts on Wetland delineation and said there were no wetlands on the property, and that they would re-route the existing stream. Marsha pointed out that the lot is under the old rules of forest conservation. Under the current County laws this could be denied, however, the County Council ruled that any applications submitted before 2020 could be grandfathered in under the previous rules. James continued stating that as of today, the project has been denied by Planning and Zoning for failure to show an adequate fire suppression plan, and for not providing adequate road and traffic safety data. The developers were trying to use traffic study data from 2017. Planning and Zoning is requiring them to use a current traffic impact study. Marsha commented that the adjacent community is very upset, and that there was no notification to the public about the community meeting until the day of the meeting.

Resident Pat Huecker commented on the new procedures at Planning and Zoning. Before 2020 and Covid restrictions, the public was allowed to go into the offices and view any files for as long as possible. Today, the offices are still closed. You must file an application for permission, wait 30 days for permission, then you can go in to view the files (that may be redacted) after paying a fee. They have made a simple process very complicated. This does not happen in other counties. Marsha suggested that we speak to Jan Jarkowski about this issue.

**Public Safety Committee** – Brian Riley

Brian had nothing to report.

**Finance Committee** – Renee Speer

Renee had nothing to report. She thanked Jim for his informative quarterly report and budget presentation.

**Recreation Committee** – Daria DeLizio

Daria had nothing to report.

**Greater Crofton Council** – Chuck See

Chuck reported that he attended the last GCC meeting on Tuesday. The new officers were elected. The President and Vice President switched places. Torrey Jacobsen is now

President. Dan Scholfield is now Vice President. The first Wednesday every month from 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, the GCC hosts a blood drive with the Red Cross at the Waugh Chapel Village Commons Community Center. If anyone wishes to donate you may sign up on the Red Cross website. Chuck reported that GCC annual dues have been revised from \$75.00 per year to \$40.00 per year. Chuck remarked to Courtney Buiniskis that the GCC has a comprehensive list of community associations of the organization, but they do not have contacts for those associations. He will send her a list. The next meeting of the GCC is Tuesday March 14 at 7:00 PM, at the Village Commons Community Center.

**Covenant Review Committee** – Stephen Tull

Stephen had nothing to report.

**Operations and Maintenance** – Rob Kendall

Rob thanked Martin for working on the legislative bond initiative for the parks. He has received plans and estimates for equipment. He is happy to see the front entrance plan intact.

**Education and Civic Affairs** – Hal Sheldon

Anna reported for Hal who was unable to attend the meeting.

County schools continue to report shortages of bus drivers, crossing guards, teachers, athletic trainers, and food service and custodial personnel. Schools have returned to regular activities, such as concerts, plays, and the prom, the first at Crofton High School. Masks are optional in County schools.

The Board of Education held a seminar with the Superintendent to learn about how the schools work and discussed redistricting plans to make better use of space in all area schools.

Martin introduced Councilwoman Shannon Leadbetter, who was able to attend after her session ended early.

Shannon introduced herself to the community. She looks forward to improving District 7. She is a resident of the CCA and is personally vested in the community. She encouraged residents to contact and communicate with her.

**Police Chief Report** – Chief Earl Fox

The Chief reported on the recent arrest of the burglary suspect. The case is being investigated by Anne Arundel County Police. The person was homeless, and had identification with an address in La Plata, MD. There were multiple warrants for his arrest in several jurisdictions. He had an accomplice who was also detained. It is believed that the suspect is responsible for eight burglaries in the triangle. He seemed to focus on homes that backed up to the golf course. The Chief stated that he cannot release any additional information at this time, since the investigation is open.

Chief Fox provided an update on the body camera equipment for the department. All departments in the State are required to use body cameras by July 1, 2025. The Crofton Police Department has received a grant from the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention for \$51,000 for the equipment. After training, the system will be up and running by March.

The Chief reported that all officers completed training with the Anne Arundel County Sheriff's department training for the new tasers. They will be in use by the end of the month.

The Chief reported the monthly statistics for December 2022. There were 463 calls for service. There were 291 patrol checks. There were 6 department assists with Anne Arundel County Police. There were 125 items in the miscellaneous category. These cover things such as administrative duties and getting squad cars serviced. There were 57 school crossings, and 15 traffic citations. That is a bit lower than usual due to the Christmas holiday and two officers were out with Covid this month.

A resident asked how long the burglary suspect was operating in the area. Earl responded that it was approximately one and a half months.

A resident asked what time of day the burglaries occurred. The Chief responded that they all occurred during the day. The suspect was apprehended during the day, and a crowbar was found on him underneath his clothing.

A resident asked about ways of alerting the residents about crimes in the area in addition to the emails from Town Hall and the social media posts. She suggested an electronic sign board posting on Crofton Parkway. The Chief responded that a few years ago the department borrowed a sign board on a trailer from the County police. There was a rash of thefts from autos, and a sign was placed on Duke of Kent Drive reminding residents to lock doors and keep valuable out of sight. Members of the community complained saying that the sign makes the neighborhood look like it is a high crime area, and this is embarrassing.

A resident asked about what information was put out into the community aside from what the County put out. Why do we have a police force that does not notify the residents, especially those living along the golf course. The Chief responded that there was communication put out by the County after the suspect could be identified. County officers spent many hours launching an investigation covering the areas of the neighborhood and the golf course. Crofton police could not put out additional information that would interfere with the County investigation. The arrest information was posted to the Crofton Police Facebook page, with the permission of County police. The Chief spoke about the downside of releasing too much information, and mentioned a resident confronting another resident on the street accusing them of being the suspect and grabbing their arm to check for a identifying tattoo.

Martin clarified that the Crofton Police Facebook page did post information on the suspect as soon as the County police put out the notification before the suspect's arrest. County police specifically asked us not to. He continued that we followed the County police with regards to the release of the information. We are unable to release information to the community until the County does.

A resident asked why residents along the golf course were not notified that there were break-ins and to be aware that this was going on, without disclosing details of the investigation. The Chief explained that this type of notification is done by the Crofton Police Department, however, in this case, Crofton police were unable to do so because of the investigation by Anne Arundel County police. The Chief explained that they could not interfere with their



investigation, nor damage the relationship with County police. He commented further that it is best to let the police do their jobs.

Jim Harvey spoke about looking at way for disseminating information via social media and our Listserv and reconstituting a Facebook page for the CCA. We currently have sixteen thousand residents, we have only one thousand email addresses. Chief Fox added that there are 2,800 followers on the Crofton Police Facebook page.

A resident asked the Chief about the status of hiring new officers. Chief Fox explained that police recruitment is at an all-time low all over the country. The department has advertised for open positions with online recruiting sites, and the FOP website. The department is making offers as competitive as possible. He is confident that they will find acceptable candidates.

A resident asked how the staff shortage has impacted the police department. Chief Fox said that it has forced the two officers to cover day shift only. This is mainly due to the shortage of crossing guards. The County police cannot provide officers for crossing guard duty at Crofton Parkway and Duke of Kent Drive. Once new officers are hired, they can go back to splitting day and night shifts to have 24-hour coverage.

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

Meeting minutes completed by Tara Gottschalck (Administrative Assistant), February 2, 2023.

MS/JH(tg)