

Councilman Dick Ladd

Anne Arundel County Council

Fifth District

April 2014 Article

March has been busy. The uncertainty about the new Severna Park High School (SPHS) has receded. Most importantly, County Executive Newman announced at opening night of the 25th anniversary of the SPHS Rock and Roll Revival that the County would forward fund construction of the new high school. This, along with the additional \$2.8 million in State FY15 funding, the Planning Advisory Committee's continuing support for full funding, and the Board of Education's recent approval of numerous SPHS construction-related contracts for award have momentum heading in the right direction. With luck, groundbreaking will have occurred before you read next month's column.

Of equal significance is the Board of Education's vote supporting the recently completed feasibility study recommending the building of a new Arnold Elementary School. This vote followed a vote disapproving the Superintendent's recommendation to revitalize the existing building. Design funding should be requested and should be approved in the FY15 budget as part of a package being prepared for other elementary schools for out-year construction as funding becomes available. For Arnold, the wait could be at least another three years for the start of the two-year construction period.

Incident to the permitting process for a large day care center on College Parkway, plans have been approved to add a center turn lane between the lights at College Manor and Jones Station Road. This will help with the numerous subdivision access roads, single residences, and the new childcare center intersecting with College Parkway without stoplight assistance between these two intersections. This is the traffic model used on Benfield Road with good success and should help reduce accident risks in that section of the road.

The issue of unremoved temporary signs along College Parkway (following the authorized weekend use) has come up again and again over the last several years. We previously met with representatives of the County Executive's Office and selected

Departmental representatives who agreed to take a look at this issue. Since there has been no follow-up meeting and no improvements in this area, I have sent a letter asking the County Executive to establish a focused, limited duration enforcement of the County sign code along College Parkway as soon as possible. I am also looking into the merits of increasing the size of the fines associated with sign placement violations and other code violations.

Legislatively, the Council considered and rejected the initial version of legislation implementing a State law requiring owners of mobile home parks with more than 38 mobile homes to pay relocation assistance to residents if the owner plans to cease operation. Only one of the County's mobile home parks is located in District 5 and it has less than 38 units. Elsewhere, the displacement impact could be substantial and will be vigorously discussed when revised legislation is introduced.

Councilman Benoit has proposed establishing a Reserve Fund for Permanent Public Improvements as authorized by Section 718(h) of the County Charter. The purpose as proposed is to fund the Board of Education's lengthy backlog of K-12 construction to include the, yet to be authorized, 13th high school. The proposal calls for the fund to receive annually a small allocation of income tax receipts. His plan is to later offset this allocation by an income tax rate increase to avoid cutting expenditures elsewhere.

While I do not agree with the income tax rate increase, I do agree more K-12 school funding would be a very good investment but not to the exclusion of necessary investments in Anne Arundel Community College (AACC). Both are integral parts of the County education infrastructure. I will offer an amendment to allow the AACC to also use this new funding source if it is eventually established. Notable among AACC's needs are a new health science building and a new science building.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss these issues or any other issues important to you. Just give me a call at 410-222-1401.