

EDITORIALS

Scare tactics

It's time for a reality check at the top levels of Harford County Public Schools.

The school system requested from the county government an increase of \$27.1 million in the budget year ahead and the county executive proposed an increase of \$11.3 million. This would bring the school system's budget for the year beginning July 1 to \$422.3 million.

Yet the leadership of the school system claims it must have an additional \$3.6 million — for a total increase of \$14.9 in the coming year's budget — or else a 3 percent raise supposedly promised to teachers will have to be eliminated.

Poppycock. While \$3.6 million is certainly a lot of money, in the Harford County Public Schools annual operating budget it amounts to less than 1 percent.

Saying the 3 percent teacher raises will be cut is nothing more than a ploy on the part of the school system to get a few million more from the county, not unlike in years past when idle threats have been made to curtail high profile programs such as instrumental music or athletics.

Keep in mind also that the school system has seen substantial increases in its budget — including an increase in non-teaching mid-to-high level staff members — in recent years at a time when enrollment has been flat. This sort of game-playing speaks to the heart of what's wrong with the county school system. Rather than looking at economic realities and working with the governments that provide funding, the school system resorts to scare tactics to get more money without having to actually justify it.

Vote of confidence

It's enough to make you question the foundations of our representative democracy. After several election cycles of using the infamous touch-screen voting system in Harford County, we'll soon be going back to the old paper ballots.

The problem: There's no mechanism for keeping a paper record of the vote with the touch-screen equipment.

Having a paper trail, in just about any endeavor, is the first step in the direction of keeping everyone honest. Having no paper trail combined with the propensity for computer hackers to cause mischief and the high stakes involved with who is in charge of running the country is a formula for, at best, a lack of faith in the system.

Add to the mix the reality that the so-called new and improved tallying system actually took longer to provide results than the old paper system, and you begin to wonder what's going on during those extra hours on election night after the polls close. Unfortunately, given the rush to move to the touch-screen system, and the rush to move back to paper sometime after the 2008 Presidential Election, it's hard to avoid wondering if some new way to manipulate paper ballots has been devised.

Let's hope, for the sake of the republic, it's a step back, but also one in the direction of accountability and reliable elections, the results of which we can have faith in.

For HdG Council

Seven men are seeking three seats on the six-member Havre de Grace City Council in the May 6 election, a contest that gives voters some very tough choices.

Havre de Grace faces a number of important issues over the next two years. The city grew rapidly through annexation in the early part of this decade, but growth and the economy have slowed, while the cost of running the government has not. There are unresolved issues over water and sewer utilities. The sewer plant still needs to go through a series of upgrades at the cost of millions, while the county wants to exert its authority over the city's water supply. Having adequate downtown parking and public access to the waterfront are other issues not so easily resolved. The city is also coming to grips with future development on the Havre de Grace side of the Route 155/I-95 interchange and, with it, the possibility that Harford Memorial Hospital will one day move "up on the hill," leaving a major void to be filled downtown.

The next city council will be required to make decisions on these and other issues. Those elected must be up to the task. All seven candidates, in our opinion, are well qualified, and each could certainly help the city over the next two years — the length of a city council term — and beyond.

Three have considerable experience in city government and have served with some distinction. Jim Miller, the only incumbent on this year's ballot, is completing his first term. John Corrieri and Fred Cullum have many, many years of service between them on the city council and, in Corrieri's case, as an interim mayor on two occasions. Cullum and Corrieri were unsuccessful candidates for mayor a year ago. There comes a point, however, where the torch needs to pass, and this year is that time. None of the other four candidates, Barry Anderson, Joseph Gamatoria, Bill Martin or James Walker, has held elected office, in the city or anywhere else, but they have been involved in the community and have closely followed the workings of the city government. And, three of them in particular possess ideas and views that would be especially welcome on the next city council. We believe Anderson, Gamatoria and Martin would make fine additions to the city council. They don't all think alike by any means, but in interviews with all the candidates except Walker, who we interviewed a year ago but was not available this year, it was clear Anderson, Gamatoria and Martin would bring a fresher perspective and much more energy to city hall.

Changes are needed from time to time if any organization, including government, is going to move ahead and perform at its best. Barry Anderson, Joseph Gamatoria and Bill Martin offer the best direction for Havre de Grace — forward. We enthusiastically endorse them for city council.

Letters to the editor

are welcomed by *The Aegis*, and correspondents are reminded that brief ones are invariably better read. In any case, the limit for letters submitted for publication is 300 words. The deadline for letters intended for Wednesday's edition is noon Monday and Friday's edition noon Wednesday.

All letters must be signed. They must also include a full address and telephone number, although these will not be published. While the free expression of diverse views and ideas on the part of our correspondents is encouraged, light editing for grammar and spelling may be expected. Letters also may be submitted by e-mail to news@theaegis.com, but should include home address and daytime phone number. *The Aegis*, of course, reserves the right to reject any letter deemed unsuitable for publication.

John D. Worthington IV, Publisher

Ted Hendricks, Executive Editor Jim Kennedy, Editorial Page Editor

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OPEN FORUM



Making the cut

Editor:

In response to the editorial April 25 in *The Aegis*, I would like to clarify a few things in defense of Fallston Valley Farms. The harvesting of 100 to 200 trees is certainly something to get worked up about if the logging trucks will be utilizing Fallston Valley Drive to do it with.

The property owner/developer, Michael Euler, has not taken into consideration that this development has a considerable amount of children in it.

To put those children in harm's way by allowing massive logging trucks filled with massive amounts of harvested trees is unacceptable. The harvesting company has been issued a two year permit to harvest these trees through a development where children walk to the bus stop, ride bikes, walk their pets, etc. This is not just about forest management. The entire development and surrounding developments will be inconvenienced by noise, road damage, traffic issues, and residual damage to the neighborhoods. Not to mention what this may do to property values. Who would want to buy real estate in a community that has an active tree harvesting operation in effect for possibly two years? And what about future permits? This operation could continue for many years to come if Mr. Euler continues to access his trees through OUR development.

In addition, I think it should be noted that Mr. Euler can access these trees directly from his own property, although it would not be as cost effective. The burden is being placed on over 90 families which include 130 children. So yes, we are raising our voices and hope to be heard. We are not a group of complaining citizens as the editorial in last week's paper would suggest. We have a right to protect our children. The selected harvesting of trees may be beneficial, but does that constitute the removal of half of the mature trees in a given area? Where do you draw the

line between profit and "good for the environment?"

No one in Harford County would want this kind of disruption to their peaceful community. We have a right to protect our children from the potential dangers of massive equipment operating in and out of our development. The residents of Fallston Valley Farms take great pride in our neighborhood, but more importantly in the safety of our children. We would hope Mr. Euler can agree that this endeavor is not in the best interest of the children of Fallston Valley Farms.

Mary Sweet
Fallston

Cleaning Edgewood

Editor:

This was not only a history making event, but also we had 140 volunteers from all over the county who joined us in Edgewood for a clean up effort. We had finished cleaning up the Edgewater Village Community and Lake Serene before lunch and the teams was eager to clean more and was able to clean up the adjacent communities. Praise the name of Jesus! Talking about what our T-shirts stated, 'Living Proof of a Living God'.

I wanted to personally thank all of the volunteers for coming out and serving. As Minister Horace Tittle noted, people from ages 9 to 70 was there to help.

Thank you Jansen Robinson for allowing myself and Minister Tittle to head up this steering committee

through the Edgewood Community Council.

Thank you Councilman Dion Guthrie and Sheriff Jesse Bane for coming out and serving the community. It's shows that you are men that are willing to help and you have a heart for the community.

Thank you to the people and ministries like Restoration World Ministries and Lydia's House for the on-site donations that were made yesterday. I don't know the names of the individuals who came with donations of water and hand sanitizer, but God bless you.

God bless you and see you at the next Clean up event!

Pastors Robert and Sharon Porter
New Life Christian Center
Edgewood

Kleins defend Forest Hill Kohl's

Editor:

We appreciate that members of the community feel strongly enough to take the time to express to us their opinions about our plans for the site at the intersection of Rock Spring Road (Route 24) and Osborne Parkway. We are happy to meet with any official community organization from the Forest Lakes or Forest Hill area, to answer concerns, scotch rumors and identify common ground. One such meeting has already taken place, and at least two more are already scheduled, in addition, of course, to all necessary public zoning and development meetings.

We, the Klein family, worked for almost five years, and spent close to a quarter of million dollars, on the integrated community shopping center, or ICSC idea, as an upgrade to the permitted B-2 use of the our site. But after almost a year of trying to lease the ICSC that we had hoped to build, we concluded it could not be done. Chief among the reasons is that today's bad economic times have kicked the bottom out of the retail leasing market for stores and mid-range restaurants, which we were counting on to anchor the ICSC.

We were forced to come up with an alternative.

We think leasing the property to Kohl's, to build a Kohl's Department Store, is an extremely attractive alternative. Kohl's plans to build a retail facility will rival any commercial facility in this county for compatibility and ecological sustainability. Even better, we have been assured by

representatives from Kohl's of their willingness to work with community representatives regarding the appearance of their proposed building. We also are holding discussions with community representatives regarding on-site amenities to improve upon what is currently required by code, with respect to the landscaping and site plan.

We know that traffic is a concern, but independent traffic studies conclude that traffic counts would be about the same overall for either for an ICSC or a Kohl's, but that a Kohl's-based center would generate less traffic on weekday mornings when school is in session, and that Kohl's would be open fewer hours per week. The "square footage" of the entire Kohl's complex would also be about 20,000 square feet less, and the number parking spaces the same, as compared to an ICSC. Berms and trees and amenities of that nature will be as many, or more, because there is more space to work with to shield the building and make the site look great.

In conclusion — although we are disappointed that our plans to build a shopping center can't succeed, we are confident that our neighbors in Forest Hill will find this an attractive and stable use for the property, and that Kohl's will be a good neighbor, too. Although due to the collapse of the housing "bubble," some property values in Harford County have suffered along with those in the rest of the country, we believe that an attractive, well-designed and well-run use of this B-2

zoned property will help stabilize property values and may even enhance them, as compared to an empty lot.

Forest Hill is a wonderful place to live and work — we should know, because we've lived and worked here for decades. Good schools, attractive communities, easy access to open spaces plus well-designed commercial areas lining Route 24 help make us all proud to live here. As Harford County residents and operators of a community-based business for four generations, we, the members of the Klein family, strive to maintain and improve this quality of life. Our web site www.kleinsonline.com includes a complete list of the Klein family's charitable activities, which we feel have positively affected the lives of every single individual in this county. We know that our proud history of giving doesn't "earn us a free ride" — we hold ourselves to a high standard as well. But even more profoundly, it does mean that, through good times and difficult times we make business decisions based not only on what is good for us as business people, but also on what we believe will be best for the Forest Hill and Harford County community, while meeting challenging business demands.

We look forward to continuing to serve our community, and we thank everyone for their willingness to share their opinions with us.

The Klein Family

Getting by with help from friends

And neighbors, too

Editor:

On March 16, we suffered a chimney fire that quickly spread and caused severe damage to our home. We would like to extend our sincerest thanks and gratitude to all of our friends and neighbors who have generously given of themselves to provide whatever help they can. Specifically, we would like to thank all of the fire department volunteers from Darlington, Havre de Grace, Whiteford, Bel Air and, most especially, Level who responded that night.

Their prompt actions and skill prevented much more serious damage from occurring and saved many of our belongings. The two young men who were able to save Angus, our 12-year-old Labrador, and the young lady who brought out simple family pictures will always be heroes to our family. Just as important is that we are safe because we followed their basic rule and had working smoke detectors in the house.

We also would like to thank J & R Sheds for the use of a storage shed and, especially, a neighboring family who has graciously provided us a house for the interim.

In our busy lives, we often lose the sense of community that has made Harford County such a wonderful place to call home. With one call, more than 100 people, some friends but most total strangers, got out of bed on a Sunday night and came to our aid. We will never be able to thank them enough, nor fully express our gratitude to all our family and friends who have stepped in since then. God bless you all.

Ned and Michelle Sayre
Churchville