

LCA General Membership Meeting
May 21, 2007
7:30 pm
Coffield Community Center

Call to order: 7:35 pm

B. Warren opened the meeting, welcoming the LCA guest speakers:

Delegate Jane Lawton
Delegate Jeff Waldstreicher
Senator Richard Madaleno

I. Special Presentation: Issues from the 2006 State legislature term and prospects of the 2007 term

Delegate Waldstreicher

Delegate Waldstreicher emphasized that delegates address concerns at both the state level as well as the local level, noting that he had worked with Council person Ervin to have the Warren Street sidewalk installed in record time (30 days). He invited residents to contact his office at any time with respect to community issues.

Mr. Waldstreicher then summarized several issues that had been addressed at the State level including: (i) a priority for education (400 million for construction to reduce class size and reduce the use of portable classrooms) and (ii) passing the clean cars bill which adopts CA standards. Mr. Waldstreicher noted that he sits on the Judiciary Committee that addresses issues such as the right to choose, gay rights, law and order, and gang violence. In this capacity, an anti-gang bill was passed to increase the tools for law enforcement to target gang leadership.

Mr. Waldstreicher noted that in 2007, the budget will be very tight and strong priorities for funding will need to be established.

With respect to Smart Growth in Montgomery County, Mr. Waldstreicher discussed the defeat of the proposed FG metro townhouse community. He noted that while the development adjacent to the metro appeared to be a model Smart Growth development, the townhomes had 2-car garages and were not mixed use or mixed income.

Delegate Lawton

Delegate Lawton noted that she had been appointed in 2005 for a partial term and noted the significant difference between that term and the 2006 term under the new democratic leadership where there had been an increase in cooperation.

Ms. Lawton sits on the Environmental Matters Committee and discussed the various bills that had been passed including: (i) the clean cars bill (noted above); (ii) the healthy air act which restricts coal plant emissions; (iii) the agricultural steward bill which provides incentives for farmers to keep runoff from the bay; (iv) the oyster restoration bill; and (v) the stormwater management act which curbs urban runoff by requiring all new developments to retain 100% of runoff water on site. With respect to this bill, Ms. Lawton noted that this will revolutionize development in Maryland.

Ms Lawton emphasized that her priorities were to reward energy efficiency in businesses, provide incentives for the use of products that lower greenhouse gases, increase pedestrian safety and the use of public transportation, and to increase the stock of affordable housing in Maryland.

One additional initiative was a bill that allowed the purchase of streetlights from Pepco. This was stimulated by the fact that while Pepco had increased the cost of maintenance of the streetlights 40%; they had failed to install energy efficient lights. Such lights have a 15-year maintenance free lifespan and changing the lights in one county would be the energy saving equivalent of removing 1 million cars from the roads. The pilot for the program is Garrett Park.

Ms. Lawton was also involved in the passing of the Human Trafficking Crime Bill. This crime is the fastest growing international crime and both Baltimore and LA ports have the highest rates. Ms. Lawton noted that it was important to pass this law to identify the parameters of the crime so that it may be prosecuted.

Senator Madaleno

Senator Madaleno serves on the Budget and Taxation Committee. He noted that the last session was uneventful as the new administration did not want to increase taxes. Therefore, there were not many new initiatives that could be funded.

Mr. Madaleno stated that with respect to our area, all of the delegates meet regularly with the State Highway Administration. Two of their priorities are Georgia Avenue and Montgomery Hills Area. He noted that the SHA had promised new signal control markers and improvements to the pedestrian crossing markings but that he had not seen these improvements materialize to date. SHA has also promised to do landscaping and appearance improvements at the beltway interchange when construction is completed (new off ramp with traffic signal).

With respect to Georgia Avenue, the SHA has rejected the plans for reconstruction as the present plans would require too much property acquisition. SHA has requested that a plan be presented to them that would require only minimal acquisition.

On the issue of widening the beltway, Sen. Madaleno stated that the State was in the process of studies to assess the infrastructure, condition of the road surfaces (underlying concrete structure), and condition of the bridges. He clearly stated that our section of the beltway would not be widened and that there was insufficient space for additional lanes, toll lane barriers, and allowance for snow removal. In addition, federal law does not allow for the transfer of free lanes to toll lanes since these lanes were already paid for by taxes.

Question and Comment Session

Following the statements, the floor was open for questions and comments.

Q: Can you predict what the beltway traffic congestion will be in 10 years?

A: No. However, if the ICC is built, congestion will be less than if it is not built. It is thought that volume will saturate and that this will hopefully spur an increase in public transportation. There is no real solution to the beltway issue. One approach is to invest in improvements to local intersections that would promote traffic flow.

Q: The National Park Seminary development will generate significant additional traffic. What will the impact be and what remedies are available?

A: Most of the roads that will be impacted are County roads and are outside of the State jurisdiction. Park and Planning approved the development and are responsible for managing the traffic derived from this. It was recommended that the community approach PP and attend meetings this summer on the issue (if available). The delegates are willing to help by writing letters etc. but this issue is outside of their area of influence.

Q: What is the status of the purple line and other mass transit initiatives?

A: There is a requirement for a dedicated funding source. The Federal Government will only fund a project if there is a dedicated funding source. There are a number of transit projects and the purple line is only one of these. It is competing with two other major projects including the Baltimore Red Line. ONLY one of the projects will ultimately be funded—funding for all of the projects would require a 0.40 increase in the gas tax. At the moment, it is unclear what the timeline is as there are not even ridership studies completed yet. In the interim, the delegates would like to see increases in the buses and the use of express buses. Delegate Lawton noted that she had other concerns with the purple line including the impact on the trails and green space, consistent with her role on the Environmental Committee.

Q: Does the State/County use clean buses?

A: Clean buses are used over all the state. They are the very tall buses that state “clean bus”. The fleet of buses is being converted to clean buses as the life of the bus is reached (20-20 yr lifespan). It is not known when the endpoint for total conversion will be.

Q: On Georgia Avenue there is a carwash that can result in backup of traffic all the way onto the beltway. This is a serious safety issue as well as one of traffic management.

A: This issue has been discussed with the owners of the property. Sen. Madaleno did not see a way of reworking the traffic line for the carwash without using some of the shopping center space.

Q: But the carwash is violating traffic laws. Why can't the present laws be enforced? If there is concern over Georgia Avenue traffic, why can't some of the soft changes be done to improve this including using existing laws?

A: State Highway and local police should be contacted about this issue as it is a safety concern for residents. The owner of the building is actually in the State Senate (Ronna Kramer). The delegates will also discuss this issue with her.

Q: Has MD become a member of the Greenhouse Gas Coalition?

A: Legislation was passed but it is unclear if MD has full membership. It must however follow the full rules. The goal is to reduce emissions to 1990 levels by year 2020.

Q: What is next in legislature for the environment?

A: The Storm Water Management Bill applies only to new developments and not to single house construction or renovations. The next stage would be to provide incentives for all cases to reduce storm water runoff including small developers or single home renovations. Another would be to increase the alternative energy requirement for the % of energy that the state purchases and to promote solar energy, incentives to convert to green buildings, and incentives for energy efficient lighting. MC has itself increased the alternative energy requirement to 15%.

Q: How do you do Smart Growth on a large scale?

A: The governor has reinstated the Office of Smart Growth. PA and VA have passed bills to clean up the bay so that helps. There needs to be a move to regional control as all

areas need to participate. This involves asking local governments to abdicate authority to a regional body which will be difficult.

The session concluded and B. Warren thanked the representatives for their time and presentations. The representatives noted that next year will be a difficult budget year and that suggestions for budget items, revenue, and cost reductions would be appreciated.

II. LCA general business

Minutes of the March 19, 2007 General Membership Meeting

Minutes of the March 19, 2007 General Membership Meeting were summarized and approved.

Treasurer's Report

S. Dickson presented the treasurer's report and account balance.

FG Pedestrian Bridge Update

B. Warren noted that progress on the installation of the security enhancements at the bridge had not been moving rapidly enough. DPWT had ordered light fixtures but the wrong parts had been delivered resulting in a delay that was not acceptable to the residents. In addition, DPWT had failed to provide appropriate timely updates on the progress or lack of progress. B. Warren had contacted DPWT and also spoken with V. Ervin's aide concerning these issues.

A concern was expressed over the trees planted adjacent to the bridge on the N side. As the trees mature, they could obscure the view of the bridge from the street.

Another concern was the lack of mirrors under the bridge that would enable someone to see people approaching from behind. B. Warren noted that this was one of the suggested items and will be checked on with DPWT.

One question raised the concern over who was responsible for removal of snow from the bridge. P. Olivetti stated that DPWT now has a bridge policy that would handle this.

Montgomery Hills Park Update

B. Warren testified at both Park and Planning and at the Council budget session about the park. There was support from N. Floreen to help to speed the request along and to investigate whether a full renovation was appropriate.

To date, the CIP states that the tennis courts and other paved areas are to be resurfaced in fiscal year 2008 which begins this July.

Prezco Pedestrian Safety Chart

The pedestrian safety chart prepared by Prezco and containing Linden pedestrian target issues was submitted to DPWT and to the County Council. B. Warren thanked all who responded with issues and noted that the mixing bowl was on the chart.

Other

- (i) A question was raised about what improvements would occur from the MH improvement parking funds. B. Warren and P. Olivetti responded that some work had been done including concrete and road pedestrian markings. LCA had noted that the street markings were not sufficient and will follow up on this issue.
- (ii) June 10th at 10:00 one of the local homes (Sharon Drive) will be featured on the television program Curb Appeal.
- (iii) P. Olivetti noted that 43 cars had been stolen within a short time period. People should lock their cars and investigate car alarms etc. The rate of car theft has risen dramatically and the police have trouble keeping up with the issue.
- (iv) C. Madsen raised the possibility of having an “annual beautification award” that might be a simple certificate etc. for someone in the neighborhood who has done landscaping or other to improve the appearance of the neighborhood. A GM vote unanimously supported the concept. C. Madsen will chair the selection committee.
- (v) The next General Membership Meeting will be on July 23rd.

Adjourn 9:17 pm