

Monthly Report for Mayor Takisha D. James



Town of Bladensburg

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September Activities & Meetings

September 5: Meeting with Bladensburg Save A Lot Owner | Chief Collington, TA Bailey-Hedgepeth and I met with the owner of the Bladensburg store. The meeting's purpose was to follow up on measures to reduce retail thefts at his store. Mr. Qasim said he appreciated the consistent responsiveness from the Bladensburg Police Department. We talked through the areas of responsibility for the business owner as well as the Town to clarify roles and discuss opportunities to work together. We also let Mr. Qasim know we would share his concerns with the Town Council at the September meeting since we would be discussing our legislative priorities. In the same vein, we would ask for support of the Town Council with advocating for stricter penalties for repeat offenders along with efforts to rehabilitate them.

Note: The Town Council approved adding this to the Town's list of legislative priorities for 2024 during the September 11th Town Council Meeting.

September 5: Parkview Monthly Tenant Council Meeting | Council Member McBryde and I attended the meeting to share community updates and field questions and concerns from residents. We were joined by Officer Threlfall who provided public safety information to residents to help them stay safe and avoid being a victim of scammers.

September 6: The Prince George's County Edition of the Maryland Legislative Black Caucus End of Session Recap and Town Hall | Attendees were welcomed to the event by Dr. Aminta H. Breaux University President, Bowie State University. We also heard introductory remarks from the Caucus Chairwoman Jheanelle Wilkins (Democrat, District 20, Montgomery County) before receiving briefings on the key areas the caucus focused on this year. It was wonderful to have the opportunity to learn about the caucus' history and how it was formed in 1970, just two years after Dr. King was assassinated. The caucus was formed by two members and now has grown to 66. They are seizing the opportunity to bring home true wins for Black Marylanders.

Takeaways from the recap were:

- Senator Michael Jackson noted pre-K funding increased by 9.1% to \$9 million.
- \$259 million has been allocated for the climate crisis battle, with a large portion set aside to help with the Chesapeake Bay and Maryland parks.
- \$200 million was secured for mass transit improvement
- \$200 million secured for veterans including the National Guard (It's important to note Prince George's County has the most veterans across the state.)
- \$8 million was secured for libraries
- \$47 million for community colleges



- Chairman Charles noted the state has never met their MBE goals, so he and Senator Melanie Griffith set out to work on this. They are pushing to meet these goals as they empower black wealth and assist local residents who need jobs.
- Delegate Adrian Biafo stated House Bill 809 passed with bipartisan support. This bill is titled “State Procurement – Minority Business Enterprise Program – Extension and Reports” and the summary states “altering to July 1, 2025, the termination date for certain provisions of law governing the Minority Business Enterprise Program and its application to offshore wind projects and video lottery terminals; and altering the date by which certain reports, studies, and guidelines must be submitted”. With the Supreme Court ruling regarding the 8A program earlier this year, the Maryland General Assembly thought it was critical to take this action.

The event was very informative in understanding the priorities of the caucus and the results of their efforts during the last legislative session.

September 9: Mexican Independence Day Celebration | It was a distinct honor to attend the

annual Mexican Independence Day Celebration organized by Bladensburg resident Eloisa Guzman and Former Bladensburg Council Member Cris Mendoza. The event featured a celebration for immigrants from Mexican and Central American countries who were commemorating their respective nation’s independence from Spain’s rule on September 15, 1821. This year marks their 193rd year of independence for these countries. We were honored to have Rafael Laveaga (Chief of Consular Section, Secretaria de Relaciones Exteriores, Embassy of Mexico), Ambassador Esteban Moctezuma, Mexican Ambassador to the United States and his wife Mrs. Moctezuma.



September 11: Honoring 9/11 | This day of reflection and remembrance marked the 22nd anniversary of the most horrific terrorist attacks on U.S. soil. On this day, we pause to remember the lives lost on that fateful day. We also are reminded to pray for the continued strength of the friends and family members of those who perished as they continue working to honor the memories and legacies of their loved ones.



September 12: Senior Cookout | Special thanks to Council Member Blount and Town staff for organizing another successful senior gathering for Bladensburg seniors. The event brought senior residents together for fellowship and fun with the Barbie theme. I look forward to next year's event and hope we will draw more seniors from the community to join us.

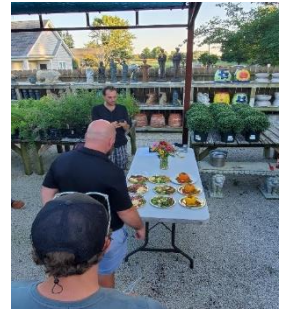


September 13: Emerson House Tenant Council Meeting | Council Member Blount, Corporal Tanksley, and I attended the monthly meeting to provide updates from the Town. Corporal Tanksley provided updates on public safety, and I distributed my monthly report as well as provided updates on Town activities and upcoming events.

September 14-15: MML Board Retreat in Galena, Maryland | The Maryland Municipal League held a Board retreat to conduct team building among the Board as well as come together for a Board Meeting. During the meeting, we received updates on the League's finances, MML Board President John Carroll shared updates on his initiative for the coming year, and we discussed and voted on MML legislative priorities for the coming year. As with previous years, the legislative priorities will be shared at next month's MML Fall Conference.



During the retreat, Board Members had a little fun with a Chopped TV Show style competition. This was helpful in giving members the opportunity to get to know each other as well as work together toward a common goal. Another highlight of the retreat was an economic development tour of Galena and surrounding communities. This prompted Mayor Casanas (Colmar Manor), Mayor Celina Benitez (Mount Rainier), and me to develop a tour as part of the fall MML Conference to highlight the Gateway Arts District and Port Towns historic and artistic offerings in October.

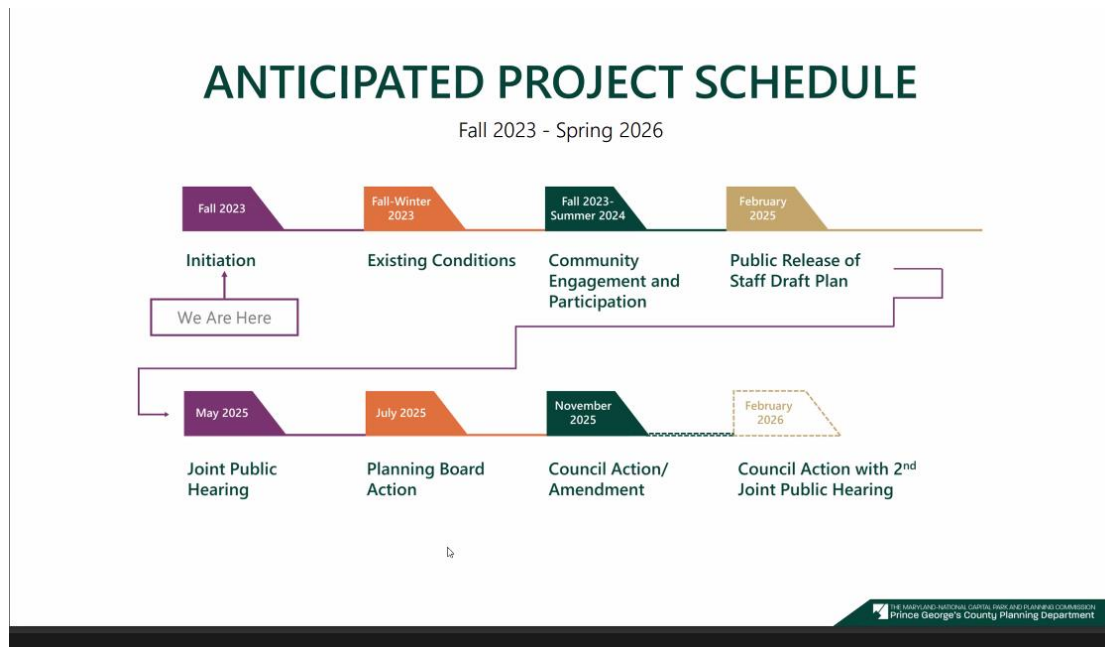


September 16: Car Wash to Support Bladensburg Youth Programs | I was pleased to support the hardworking young people who participated in the car wash to raise proceeds for their initiatives. The CAT Unit did a wonderful job of organizing this event.



Council Member Ivey Public Safety and Mental Health Meeting | Ms. Ivey hosted a meeting at the Bladensburg Community Center that was facilitated by Reverend Addison and the Port Towns Youth Council. The presentation focused on the increase of violent incidents happening throughout the country and the desire to create a program to allow students to find other ways to deal with their feelings and prevent violence. The program will commence in September and extend throughout the school year. Reverend Addison also noted she would reach out to the Port Towns for ways to engage the students in activities of the communities as a way to expose them to other opportunities. This pilot program is being done in conjunction with Council Member Ivey's office as a pilot program.

September 19: Port Towns Meeting | The meeting was held virtually and hosted by Cottage City. During the meeting we received an update from Josephine Selvakumar (Prince George's County Planning Department) on the Port Towns Sector Plan. Below is the Anticipated Project Schedule.



Carter Reitman, Sustainable Communities Program Manager of the Department of Housing and Community Development, updated the group on the program. She also let us know our current Sustainable Community Designation expires May 2024. We discussed the process for establishing our goals and engaging DHCD staff for technical assistance prior to submitting our application. Town Administrator Bailey-Hedgepeth and Town Administrator Rod Barnes agreed to lead this effort.

Commissioner Ann Young of Cottage City asked the Port Towns communities to support two-person train crews. Given how close the trains come to residential communities, this measure could be a life-saving measure. If a medical emergency were to arise on the freight trains, it's imperative to have another operator present as a backup. The Port Towns agreed to support this in the upcoming legislative session. The bill summary states:

This bill generally prohibits a train or light engine used in connection with the movement of railroad freight that shares the same rail corridor as a high-speed passenger or commuter train from operating in the State unless it has a crew of at least two individuals. The bill does not apply to a train or light engine used in connection with the movement of railroad freight involving hostler service or utility employees in yard service. A person who willfully violates the bill's prohibition is guilty of a misdemeanor and subject to specified penalties. A railroad company is solely responsible for the actions of its agents or employees in violation of the bill.

A major topic of discussion was the Port Towns Community Development Corporation. For several years the Port Towns has made efforts to meet with the CDC and reestablish our partnership. Unfortunately, the previous Executive Director, Nancy Meyers, and the most recent Executive Director, Chris Melendez, have refused all efforts to meet with us. We heard an update from Diana Guelespe and Denise Hamler, former Board Members of the Port Towns CDC, that they, too, have been making efforts to reach out to Ms. Melendez and to no avail. Ms. Hamler and Ms. Guelespe noted they were advised that both Ms. Meyers and Ms. Melendez moved out of the areas and were not responding to their calls or emails for a meeting request, with the most recent email being on September 14, 2023. We also learned the CDC has two bank accounts with funds total of approximately \$90,000 in them, including funds for the B5

organization. It was noted that the CDC was a fiduciary agent for the B5 at some point, which further extends our concerns regarding the CDC's management and handling of funds.

Options were discussed regarding the benefits of starting a new organization as compared to working to relaunch the current CDC.



September 19: Little Amal Visits International High School of Langley Park | Little Amal is an international symbol of hope, compassion and human rights for refugees. She has traveled over 6,000 miles and visited 15 countries since July 2021.

September 27: Metropolitan Council of Governments Climate Energy & Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC) Meeting |

During the meeting we heard report outs on the various subcommittee meetings. We received an update from Tim Masters, COG Environmental Programs, regarding EPA Proposed Fuel Efficiency Standards. A joint letter was presented for consideration as proposed with the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee (MWAQC), the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (COG) Climate, Energy and Environment Policy Committee (CEEPC), and the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), to support the proposed rule to establish Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) Standards for Passenger Cars and Light Trucks for Model Years 2027–2032 and Fuel Efficiency Standards for Heavy-Duty Pickup Trucks and Vans (HDPUVs) for Model Years 2030–2035. The motion to approve the join letter passed unanimously.

Committee members also received an update on the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant (CPRG) update. COG is also leading the initiative to develop a MSA Priority Climate Action Plan (PCAP) by March 1, 2024. Measures and projects in the plan will be eligible for the CPRG competitive implementation grants.



September 30: Walking Tour of the Anacostia Riverfront |

Secretary Josh Kurtz, Department of Natural Resources and Delegate Ivey were recently appointed to represent the State of Maryland on the Chesapeake Bay Commission. The tour was hosting to introduce Secretary Kurtz to the Port Towns leadership and provide an opportunity to show some of the challenges we are facing with the river cleanup as well as storm water management

and storm water runoff issues in the immediate area. Secretary Kurtz was able to offer a few immediate suggestions on funding sources, but we agreed to compile our notes and the list of projects where assistance would be needed and submit them to the Secretary and Delegate Ivey.

