

## Alderman's Notebook

From my perspective it will be a busy year for Ward 8 and the City. In Eastport several projects will take shape. First we will be getting a report on the Traffic and Parking Study commissioned by the Planning and Zoning Department. My hope is that the consultants will make sense of the mysterious stop sign pattern, the one-way streets and the parking zones. We should be hearing from them sometime soon.

The New Year will see several new developments, ...well, develop. The old Hopkin's warehouse should be coming down soon and the new residential and commercial mixed use building will go up in its place. I plan to push the long dormant Fourth Street Streetscape Plan in the Capital Improvement Plan budget in this year's Capital Budget Plan.

Plans for the South Annapolis Yacht Center, the combination of the old Sarles and Petrini boatyards, are moving along. Planning and Zoning Staff have received many public comments and are sorting out a number of issues. Although the comment period has closed, Tom Smith ([410-263-7961](tel:410-263-7961)) is still taking input and it is likely that there will be a public hearing in the next few months. Similarly, the Annapolis Yacht Club is moving forward with its plans for redevelopment of the Eastport part of their properties, this in spite of the fire on the "Westport" side of Spa Creek. The plans should be available for review sometime soon, with a public hearing to follow that.

I'm told that plans for the proposed redevelopment of the Eastport Shopping Center are getting to a point where they can be reviewed for comments. Our neighbor Leo Wilson is the architect for the project [and also for the Warehouse and AYC projects] and he promises that we will like the new design. I have asked that the traffic study group take this development under consideration during their analysis.

Finally, the ECA Architecture and Zoning Committee, which has been working with Lisa Craig of Planning and Zoning to finalize their work on demolition rules for the R2 NC (Residential Neighborhood Conservation zone). The task is to balance personal property rights with protection of the conservation district. This has been a tough issue for Eastport for many years now and I believe that the Committee is coming up with a good

proposal. This will be a topic for a future Town Hall Meeting when the revisions are ready for comments.

On the City front, this years will start with several important pieces of legislation related to zoning and development. A subcommittee of which I'm a member has been working for months on legislation to bolster the City's Forest Conservation Act code and processes. This will follow state law and make explicit the City procedures and practices regarding protecting our remaining forests and woodlands while allowing smart growth. You can be sure that there will be a number of opportunities for the public to review and opine on the ordinance.

Alderman Littmann and I are ready to introduce some revisions to our Adequate Public Facilities for Schools this month. These revisions will be taken up by City Council committees and then move on for a Council vote. Again, this is a balance between development and the adequacy of school facilities. I am also working with Alderman Budge on a number of pieces of legislation to improve the code on hawkers and peddlers; removal for cause of members of Boards, Commissions and Committees; and revisions to City Code Title 21 – Planning and Zoning.

Last but not least, no message from me would be complete without a word or two on the City Budget. Two years ago I started talking about the ten year budget projections made by the Finance Department. Those projections portend an unsustainable situation over time without major tax increases, reductions in services or a combination of both. We have been squeezing by over the last two years without significant changes. There have been no property tax increases nor reductions in City services. It's now time to pay the piper.

The current budget was passed without a significant surplus. Current indications are that spending will exceed the budgeted amount and that we will run a deficit, thus depleting the fund balance we worked so hard to achieve. In addition, for the coming budget (FY 2017) projected spending at current levels of service will exceed projected revenues from all sources, thus another deficit. Further, the gap between revenues and spending are projected to continue to increase each year from here on.

For the fiscal budget 2017 exercise about to begin we will be looking for either three to four million in new revenue or commensurate reductions in

services, just to stay even. The Administration is looking at some ideas to reorganize and down size departments and some ideas about out-sourcing of services. These actions may help in the near-term, but will not be enough as the budget gap grows. Sorry to end on such a down note, but this day has been coming for a while and now it's here.

I'm planning on a Town Hall meeting some Thursday towards of this month or early in February to discuss all of the issues in this missive. With all the work ahead I for one am looking forward to 2016.

I wish all of you a happy and healthy new year.

Ross Arnett, Alderman, Ward 8