

MONTHLY REPORT MAYOR TAKISHA D. JAMES BLADENSBURG TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

MONDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2024



Bladensburg Town Hall
4229 Edmonston Road, Bladensburg, MD
20710
Email: tjames@bladensburgmd.gov
Phone: (301) 927-7049

Meetings, Events and Updates (For the Month of September)

September 2024

September 1: Maryland 250 Commission recognition ceremony for local winners of America250 America's Field Trip

The First Gentleman and I traveled to the Maryland State Fair in Timonium to attend the recognition ceremony for nine Maryland students who were winners of the America250 America's Field Trip national contest. The students had the opportunity to be recognized and share their work during the ceremony.

America250 was created by Congress to commemorate America's 250th birthday. The America's Field Trip national contest invited students to reflect on what America means to them. Thousands of students from across the country submitted inspiring essays, art, and videos. The Commission was pleased to have nine Maryland students selected as first and second place winners.

September 4: Prince George's County Liquor Board Hearing | I joined Senator Augustine and Chief Collington in attending this virtual hearing due to Base Lounge, a business located outside of the Town of Bladensburg, being on the agenda. The Prince George's County Police Department was the lead on this matter and noted that the Base (Lounge) had repeated disturbances, disorderly incidents on the premises, assault calls for service, and shooting calls for service, totaling 42 incidents. As noted on the meeting agenda "One shooting resulted in a bullet entering the wall of a private home. On another occasion, an altercation started inside the establishment, spilled over into the parking lot, and resulted in a female patron being shot. For these reasons, the licensee is being summoned regarding danger to the peace and safety of the community." Again, this matter was brought before the Board by the Prince George's County Board of Commissioners to hold the owner accountable for providing the security measures necessary to ensure the patrons of his establishment are safe inside and outside as well as the residents located in close proximity. The Senator, Chief, and I expressed our deep concerns with the lack of safety and the number of incidents occurring at the Base Lounge. While we are in support of small and minority-owned businesses having the opportunity to thrive in our community, we cannot compromise on having an expectation of accountability for taking the necessary measures to ensure the safety of patrons and the surrounding community.

September 4: PY 48R | The town continued with improvements to 57th Avenue by completing sidewalk ramps along 57th Avenue.



September 5: MML Executive Committee Meeting | We received a report from the MML Board President, Michael O'Connor, Mayor of Frederick, MD. In recapping his activities over the summer months, he noted his gratitude for the Port Towns tour in which Bladensburg participated. Theresa Kuhns also provided a report out on her meetings and activities as president of MML. The Executive Committee also received an update on the organization's financials and investments. We also reviewed the organization's policy for endorsing a candidate for the NLC Board, along with agenda items for the upcoming Board of Directors Retreat scheduled for Friday, September 13th.

September 11: Emerson House Tenant Council Meeting | I attended the meeting with Acting Sargeant Tanksley, and Acting Lt. Goins to share updates regarding the town and address any questions the residents may have had. I shared updates on the Town's projects and provided printed copies of my most recent report along with flyers for upcoming events. A/Sgt. And A/Lt. Goins shared public safety updates and the upcoming police department.

September 12: Town Council Retreat | The Town Council is committed to working together in a respectful and collaborative manner. To this end, we held our 2024 Council Retreat to provide an opportunity for professionally facilitated team building exercises, communication enhancement training and trust building. These efforts will surely enable the Council to continue working together in a supportive, respectful, and collaborative manner.

Moving forward, the Council agreed to begin holding quarterly work sessions to provide an additional opportunity for communication and collaboration beyond the regularly scheduled monthly meetings. The meetings will consist of the following agenda:

- Review the current status of the items listed below and review areas where support is needed for the current quarter and the next quarter:
 - Events (including holiday events)
 - Programs
 - Policies (inclusive of legislative priorities)

- Share the status of where we are with our respective items, needed support, and provide an overview of the plan to get the project/event/policies accomplished.
- We also agreed to begin having after-action meetings to review the events and gather feedback to help prepare for the next year. (We can include this in the quarterly meetings or hold these meetings separately.)
- To create an atmosphere of respect for each other we agreed to exercise professional courtesy, by allowing people to finish their thoughts when speaking before someone interjects.

September 14: MML Board of Directors Retreat | The Board of Directors met for our fall retreat in Annapolis in the Governor's Signing Room of the State Capitol. We received an update regarding the Maryland Board of Elections and the understanding they will no longer be supporting municipal elections moving forward. The timing was concerning, as there were municipal elections were coming up in less than a week from the Board Retreat.

The Legislative Committee presented the legislative priorities and strategic initiatives for the coming legislative session. The priorities will be formally presented at the MML Fall Conference. At the conclusion of the business meeting, we were joined by Jeremy Baker, Chief of Staff for Speaker of the House Adrienne Jones, and Judicial Proceedings Committee Chair Will Smith. We also were joined by staff members from the Moore Miller Administration in Mollie Byron, Dylan Goldberg, and Eric Leuidtke. During the conversation, we were able to hear the priorities of each office and have a Q&A session with the speakers. I raised concerns regarding retail theft and accountability of juveniles and, where necessary, accountability for parents with repeat offenders. Priorities around affordability of housing, homelessness, and climate were also discussed.

We ended the day with a presentation by Story District called “Elevate Your Influence – The Storyteller’s Toolkit.” The facilitator helped us to understand the importance of communicating in a way that frames our stories and delivers them in a compelling way. This is critically important when we think about writing and giving testimony before the legislature on behalf of our communities. The presentation was well received and will be followed up with the presenters participating in the MML Fall Conference.

Note: The State of the Municipality Briefing will be held on December 5 in Annapolis.

September 13: Meeting with MML Leadership Regarding the Maglev | Members of the Board from Prince George’s County met with the MML CEO and Board President to address concerns around the project developers for the Northeast Maglev reaching out to use MML to setup a meeting with a few municipalities from within the County. After discussing our concerns, we agreed to follow up for a meeting without MML facilitating. After following up with the mayors who were part of the conversation, we agreed the best next step would be requesting the developers come to a future PGCMA meeting and share the so-called updates and new routes they were planning to present. I contacted the PGCMA Executive Board to

consider this request. The Board has agreed, so we'll have the opportunity to hear from them at the October meeting. We'll also request a follow-up meeting with the developers in our community and county residents to allow for questions to be received to get to the truth regarding this project.

After getting through the business items on our agenda, we were fortunate to receive updates from Judiciary Committee Chair, Senator Will Smith, Governor's Moore Staff Members Eric Leudtke, Mollie Byron, and Dyllan Goldberg, as well as Chief of Staff for Speaker of the House of Delegates Adrienne Jones.

September 15: Hispanic Heritage Month is upon us! | From September 15 through October 15, let's come together to celebrate and honor the rich cultural contributions and achievements of Hispanic Americans.

This month is a wonderful opportunity to recognize the many generations of Hispanic Americans who have made significant and positive impacts on our country. Their influence can be seen in every corner of our society, from the arts and sciences to business and community leadership.

I encourage each of you to take time to celebrate and reflect on the vibrant Hispanic cultures that enrich our nation. Here are a few ways you can participate:

- 1) Explore Hispanic Heritage: Attend local events, exhibitions, or performances that highlight Hispanic culture and history.
- 2) Support Hispanic Businesses: Consider shopping at Hispanic-owned businesses or dining at Hispanic restaurants. Your support helps strengthen and uplift our community.
- 3) Learn and Share: Read books, watch films, or listen to music by Hispanic creators. Share your discoveries with friends and family to spread awareness and appreciation.

Let's make a special effort to honor our Hispanic brothers and sisters this month and beyond. Their contributions continue to inspire and enhance our communities in countless ways.

*Photo credit: Kirtland Airforce Base

September 15: Washington

Commanders Game | The First Gentleman and I were honored to be guests of Governor Wes Moore at the season home opener for the Commanders. Attending this game afforded me the opportunity to share our community's concerns regarding the Maglev train being proposed by Northeast Maglev. I highlighted specific concerns, including:

- This train will pass through a predominantly minority county without providing a stop in the county.
- The developer is making promises of jobs for those directly impacted by the train. The reality is there is no way to make this a 100% guarantee. If enough qualified applicants are not applying for these jobs or are not considered, the developer and construction company will default to their dedicated construction workers.
- The developer is saying they have new routes that impact a smaller number of communities and that can't be the case when the project is and has been under review by the FRA and going through the review process as proposed a few years ago.
- The effort to contact us through MML rather than coming directly to the community leaders was a concern.

Apart from the Maglev, I also discussed our need for a new Town Hall in order to continue serving the community. Additionally, we discussed the Trade School and how this project has been delayed from the turnover with staffing. Now that we are fully staffed, the town can get this project moving forward and we are working to build the right coalition of partners to help create the framework to ensure success.



September 22: I Graduated from the University of Maryland School of Public Policy Academy for Excellence in Local Governance Program | I'm pleased to inform the community that I completed the requirements for this program and was able to graduate on September 22nd. I completed several core and elective classes while attending MML's annual summer and fall conferences to satisfy the



program requirements. Attending the required and elective courses provides municipal staff and elected officials the opportunity to enhance their knowledge of important matters of direct importance to local communities. Courses range from budgeting matters, ethics, mental health, economic development, public safety, administration, and so much more. I'm immensely grateful to be a recipient of this quality training, which is offered in partnership with the University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Maryland Municipal League, Local Government Insurance Trust, and the Maryland Association of Counties.

September 21: Colmar Manor Day | Members of the Town Council attended this celebration in honor of the town's 97th anniversary. They were recognized by representatives from county, state, and federal offices representing our community.



September 23: Walkable Watershed Steering Committee Meeting | The committee met to recap the goals and status of the collaboration as well as potential projects.

September 24: Town Council Closed Session | The Council met to discuss personnel matters under the following:

- General Provisions Article §3-305 (b) (1) of the Maryland Code, the Mayor and Council will meet in a Closed Session to consider a matter to discuss the appointment, employment, assignment, promotion, discipline, demotion, compensation, removal, resignation, or performance evaluation of appointees, employees, or officials over whom this public body has jurisdiction; any other personnel matter that affects one or more specific individuals.

As an outcome of the meeting, the Council provided direction to the Town Administrator concerning personnel matters.

September 24: Port Towns Quarterly Meeting | Cottage City hosted the meeting. We heard from the Port Towns Sector Plan team, who shared updates for each of the Port Towns. We also learned that the process for closing down the Port Towns CDC is still underway and should be completed by the end of the year.