



Black American Luminaries, p.7



Winter Youth Musical, p.12

City Council Reaffirms Commitment To Diversity and Community Pledge

by Anna Bedford-Dillow

On Thursday, February 13, Greenbelt City Council shared a letter to residents. “The past few weeks have been a time of fear and uncertainty for many Greenbelt residents,” reads the letter, which reaffirms their commitment to a diverse population and to being a respectful and welcoming community. It comes as the Trump administration brands diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility (DEIA) programs and positions as “anti-constitutional” and “discrimination,” terminating DEIA requirements and positions in the federal government and directing “strong action to end private sector DEIA discrimination, including civil compliance investigations.” Trump has also taken aim at immigrants, in particular, expanding Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) reach to include previously sensitive locations: schools, places of worship and hospitals, and expanding

expedited removals, pledging mass deportations, characterizing immigrants as criminal and even targeting birthright citizenship. Council’s letter of commitment to a diverse population comes as private companies, even those without donations or ties to the current administration, divest themselves of DEIA programs.

The Community Pledge

“Although the [community] pledge has been amended over the years to reflect our growing and changing community and values, the spirit has remained the same,” says council’s letter.

The pledge reads: “The strength of Greenbelt is diverse people living together in a spirit of cooperation. We celebrate all people. By sharing together all are enriched. We strive to be a respectful, welcoming community that is open, accessible, safe and fair.”

See DIVERSITY, page 4

Local Families Cite Struggles With Staggering Utility Bills

by Cathie Meetre

Despite complaints about bills on local social media, the utilities Town Hall meeting of February 18 wasn’t well-attended by residents up in arms (see the meeting report on page 11). City staff and utility and state government representatives outnumbered residents.

Pepco shows a noticeable increase in rates between last winter and this. Coupled with a cold snap, the impact is significant and especially so for Greenbelt Homes, Inc. (GHI) residents, most of whose homes are all electric.



A Utility Providers Town Hall was held on February 18.

Huge Bills

On the Greenbelters’ Facebook page, residents complain of recent bills over \$700 and up to nearly \$1,000 even while barely staying warm. Residents who elected to continue using the resistance (baseboard) heaters – which use about four times the energy as the heat pump solution – were particularly hard hit as temperatures plummeted.

A Complicated Picture

Monthly electric bills are comprised of a delivery fee and a supply fee both based on the amount of energy used, plus a customer charge that is a smaller flat fee. There are also local taxes and multiple surcharges that relate to infrastructure investment and the cost of efficiency incentives. Delivery fees include the investments utility

companies make in maintaining, repairing or improving the grid (poles, wires, substations, etc.). Supply is the actual cost of the power. For electricity, all these costs have been rising and companies have also been permitted by the Maryland Public Service Commission to recoup their infrastructure

See UTILITY BILLS, page 11

Black History Month

A Greenbelt African American Family in Slavery and Freedom

by Alan Virta

Not much is known of the personal histories of the enslaved African Americans who lived and worked on the farms and plantations that now are Greenbelt. Their family relationships are hard to trace over time, because in most records enslaved people were identified only by their first names. There is one such family from Greenbelt, however, whose history can be traced. They were the Waters family:

Vachel and Flora Waters and their children. Vachel and Flora met while enslaved in Greenbelt but gained their freedom here too.



Susannah Turner's inventory from estate papers lists the four older children of Vachel and Flora Waters: Benjamin, Greenbury, James and Airey.

Two unusual circumstances make it possible to trace the Waters family history. One is that both Vachel and Flora were uncommon first names that stand out in county records before their family surnames were ever recorded. The second is that their

enslavers became their emancipators as well. It was only after they and their children were freed early in the 19th century that their surnames were finally entered into the public record, enabling us to go both forward and backward in time to reconstruct their family history.

The key to unlocking their family history was found in the District of Columbia’s Register of Free Negroes, a record created to serve as proof for free Blacks that they were indeed free, not enslaved. Five siblings named Waters registered between 1827 and 1831, two of whom were explicitly identified as children of Vachel and Flora

See SLAVERY, page 7

County Executive Candidates Respond to FD Staffing Crisis

by Diya Shah and Ryan Colasanti

The Greenbelt News Review asked candidates running for the position of Prince George’s County Executive their stance on the staffing crisis and leadership within the Prince George’s County Fire Department. We received responses from six of the remaining 11 candidates.

Last June Fire Chief Tiffany Green reallocated 55 firefighters from stations in Prince George’s County to combat staff shortages. This included 24 career firefighters from Greenbelt Fire Station 35. Following the reassignment, the impacted communities complained of increasing response

times and decreased services to their areas. What was supposed to be a temporary reallocation plan remains in effect, with Greenbelt residents and leaders continuing to express concern and frustration.

We asked the candidates, “As County Executive, would you commit to returning career staff to Greenbelt? How do you plan to address the staffing crisis in the Prince George’s County Fire Department, and do you plan to change the leadership of the department?”

See COUNTY EXEC, page 8

What Goes On

Monday, February 24

7:30 p.m., City Council Meeting, Municipal Building

Wednesday, February 26

7:30 p.m., Council Worksession: Prince George’s County Public Schools Superintendent Millard House II and Staff (tentative)

See the city ad on page 5 or the meetings calendar at greenbeltd.gov for more information.



Protesters gather outside the Municipal Building on Presidents Day. See story on page 12.

Editorial

Lament for Transparency

With increasing frequency, spokespersons for county bodies from the fire department to the schools decline to answer questions from the public and the press. Last year a Public Information Officer from the Prince George's County Fire Department directed members of the public attending a town hall, as well as our city government and our paper, to file Maryland Public Information Act (MPIA) requests for various information we sought. In the fall, our request of Prince George's County Homeland Security to know average 911 hold times was met with direction to file an MPIA request. Two weeks ago, simple questions to Prince George's County Public Schools about plans to renegotiate a contract or to continue to work with a company were swiftly rebuffed with instructions to, you guessed it, file an MPIA. This, despite the fact that future plans can't be found in past records.

The News Review has filed a fair number of MPIAs over the last year, in particular. They require time to submit and usually a three-month wait for a reply. When seeking documents, this seems a reasonable procedure, though it's frequently also used to stall the sharing of information. However, when instruction to file an MPIA becomes the standard answer to almost any question posed to county bodies, it gives us pause to wonder why public officials are averse to sharing information willingly, to standing behind or explaining their decisions. Is there an unusual level of obstruction and lack of transparency at play in our county? What is the future role of Public Information Officers who are not obliged to return calls and direct enquiries to the MPIA process?

What is lost in making MPIAs the standard procedure for any question is the ability to have conversations, to understand perspectives and greater context not found in narrowly answered legal requests or in the documents and records they produce. What's also lost is the chance to inform the public in a timely manner and to build trust.

As Prince George's County prepares to elect a new county executive, we hope the winner will plan to lead us toward transparency and will bring a willingness to answer questions the public and press have a right to ask.

Letters to the Editor

USAID Reporting

I have been very pleased with the reporting on USAID and thank Anna Bedford-Dillow and the Greenbelt News Review team. We don't know if the laundry list of payments is real, nor do we know the context for any of them, but Elon Musk stated at his recent news conference that the condoms went to Gaza, a

province in Mozambique – not Gaza in Palestine – to reduce the spread of AIDS. Hopefully, the American people will learn the truth one day soon. For now, continue to keep us up to date from the perspective of those who worked for that agency as we watch history (from 1939) repeat itself.

Lois Rosado

On Screen at Greenbelt Cinema

I'm Still Here

Eunice Paiva (Fernanda Torres) investigates her husband Rubens' disappearance while maintaining family stability. Rubens is a former PTB (Brazilian Labor Party) deputy who has gone missing. Said critic Sean Collier of Pittsburgh Magazine, "The film is carried by Torres, who portrays this unimaginable burden with a mix of steely resolve and constant threadbare tension."

Documentary Oscar Shorts

Death by Numbers, directed by Kim A. Snyder; I Am Ready, Warden, directed by Smriti Mundhra; Incident, directed by Bill Morrison; Instruments of a Beating Heart, directed by Ema Ryan Yamazaki; and The Only Girl in the Orchestra, directed by Molly O'Brien

Animated Oscar Shorts

Beautiful Men, directed by Nicolas Keppens; In the Shadow of the Cypress, directed by Hossein Molayemi and Shirin Sohani; Magic Candies, directed by Daisuke Nishio; Wander to Wonder, directed by Nina Gantz; and Yuck! directed by Loïc Espuche

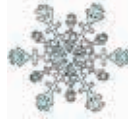
Live Action Oscar Shorts

A Lien, directed by David Cutler-Kreutz and Sam Cutler-Kreutz; Anuja, directed by Adam J. Graves; I'm Not a Robot, directed by Victoria Warmerdam; The Last Ranger, directed by Cindy Lee; and The Man Who Could Not Remain Silent, directed by Nebojša Slijepčević

Piece by Piece

This documentary is a unique cinematic experience that invites audiences on a vibrant journey through the life of cultural icon Pharrell Williams. Told through the lens of LEGO® animation, turn up the volume on your imagination and witness the evolution of one of music's most innovative minds. Critics' Consensus, according to Rotten Tomatoes: "A highly unusual twist on the documentary

See **ON SCREEN**, page 4



Greenbelt Cinema
129 Centerway
301-329-2034
www.greenbeltcinema.org
Members Always \$6.50!
Member kids are always FREE!
Adults \$9, Kids \$6,
Senior/Student/Military \$8
All shows before 5 PM:
Adults \$7, Kids \$5
OC = Open Captions
CC = Closed Captions
DVS = Descriptive Video Service

SHOWTIMES: FEBRUARY 21ST- 27TH

I'm Still Here (PG-13) (2024)
(138 mins)

Brazilian Portuguese with
English subtitles
Screen 1 - Main Auditorium
Fri. 5:00 PM
Sun. 2:00 PM
Tues. 5:00 PM

Screen 2 - The Screening Room
Sat. 7:30 PM
Mon. 4:00 PM
Wed. 7:30 PM
Thurs. 7:45 PM

Documentary Oscar Shorts
(2025) (165 mins)

may not be appropriate for
audiences under the age of 14
Screen 1 - Main Auditorium
Sat. 4:30 PM, Sun. 5:00 PM
Mon. 2:00 PM, Wed. 4:50 PM
Thurs. 7:30 PM

Screen 2 - The Screening Room
Fri. 4:30 PM
Tues. 4:50 PM

Animated Oscar Shorts
(2025) (90 mins)

may not be appropriate for
audiences under the age of 14
Screen 1 - Main Auditorium
Fri. 8:00 PM, Mon. 5:30 PM
Wed. 8:15 PM, Thurs. 5:15 PM

Screen 2 - The Screening Room
Sat. 5:00 PM
Sun. 1:00 PM
Tues. 8:15 PM

Live Action Oscar Shorts
(2025) (104 mins)

may not be appropriate for
audiences under the age of 14
Screen 1 - Main Auditorium
Sat. 8:00 PM
Tues. 8:00 PM
Thurs. 5:15 PM

Screen 2 - The Screening Room
Fri. 7:50 PM, Sun. 3:00 PM
Mon. 1:40 PM, Wed. 5:00 PM

Piece By Piece (PG) (CC)
(DVS) (2024) (94 mins)

Free! Sponsored by RUAK &
the Greenbelt Black History
& Culture Committee!
Screen 1 - Main Auditorium
Sat. 1:00 PM

Do the Right Thing (R) (1989)
(120 mins) Film in Focus
Led by Dr. John Dranbinski
Capped at 25

Screen 2 - The Screening Room
Mon. 7:00 PM

Pete Reppert



WINTER UNITES US ALL.

- News Review, December 14, 2017

Letters Policy

Deadline for letters is 6 p.m. Monday. Submission does not guarantee publication. Letters should be no longer than 300 words (shorter letters are more likely to be published).

Letters may be edited for clarity, grammar, civility and space constraints. The News Review may add a comment from the editor if deemed necessary.

All letters must include the letter writer's name, physical address, and telephone number. Only the name will be published; the News Review will consider requests for the name to be withheld.



Greenbelt News Review

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PUBLICATION DEADLINES:

- Monday 2 p.m. Articles/photos over 700 words, Display ads (not camera ready).
- Monday 6 p.m. All letters to the editor (300 word limit).
- Tuesday 2 p.m. Articles/photos under 700 words, photographs not associated with a story.
- Tuesday 6 p.m. Classified ads and camera-ready display ads.
- Email submission is available. Hardcopy submissions (delivered by respective deadline) may be mailed to the address above or left in the Co-op grocery store drop box or GNR external office door mail slot, as shown below.
- Payment must accompany ads except by prior arrangement.

MAIL SUBSCRIPTION: \$55/year

Greenbelt Community Center at 15 Crescent Rd.
OFFICE HOURS: Monday and Tuesday, 2 - 4 p.m.
GNR external office door mail slot is located up a few stairs 25 yards left of the Community Center's east door near the Municipal Building.

Community Events

At the Library

Greenbelt Library's regular hours are Mondays 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Tuesdays and Wednesdays noon to 8 p.m., Thursdays and Fridays 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Saturdays 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sundays 1 to 5 p.m.

Storytimes

Friday, February 21, 11:15 a.m., ages 2 to 3. Register at pgcmls.info/event/12620697.

Wednesday, February 26, 12:15 p.m., ages 3 to 5. Register at pgcmls.info/event/12620654.

Thursday, February 27, 10:15 a.m., ages newborn to 2. Register at pgcmls.info/event/12620679.

Robotics and Black History

Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS) is celebrating Black History Month with over 75 free programs and events to give Library customers of all ages a lively and engaging experience centered around the heritage and community of Black culture in Prince George's County and beyond.

Throughout the year, PGCMLS' Black Heritage hub serves as a cultural resource for upcoming Library events, research databases, book recommendations and much more. It is available 24/7 by visiting: pgcmls.info/black-heritage.

Passport Services

Greenbelt Library serves as a U.S. Passport Acceptance Facility. Applications are accepted by appointment only; schedule a 30-minute appointment by calling 240-455-5451 or visiting pgcmls.info/passport-services.

Stamp Out Hunger Close to Home

The impact of a fully stocked pantry is profound. The shelves at the Greenbelt Interfaith Leadership Association food pantry at St. Hugh's were emptied during the holidays. To help keep the shelves stocked, PORCH will pick up nonperishable food placed on porches as scheduled below.

Sunday, February 23 – by 5 p.m. for 14 and 16 Courts Ridge Road, 8 and 10 Courts Southway and Lakeside Drive.



Senior Nutrition Program Luncheon

The Senior Nutrition Food and Friendship program provides lunch for seniors Monday through Friday at the Community Center beginning at 11:30 a.m. Meals must be reserved two weeks ahead so that enough food is ordered. Participants must complete a registration form in person at the Community Center office, Monday through Friday between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. There is a suggested donation. Call 301-397-2208, ext. 4215 with questions.

Two menu options, one vegetarian, will be offered for each luncheon. All meals, which provide at least one third of recommended dietary allowances for older adults, include margarine, coffee or tea and skim milk.

Astronomical Lecture On Benjamin Banneker

In celebration of Black History Month, the Astronomical Society of Greenbelt will present a talk on Benjamin Banneker on Thursday, February 27 at 7:30 p.m. at the Community Center. Kevin A. Wilson, Ph.D., will deliver the lecture. Banneker was not only the first prominent Black scientist in the United States but also an astronomer and resident of Maryland. Learn about this fascinating figure. An informal discussion will begin at 7 p.m. and the talk will follow at 7:30 p.m. This event is free and open to the public.



Orchestra to Perform Black History Concert

Greenbelt Community Orchestra will give a free concert at the Community Center on Sunday, February 23 at 3 p.m. The program will feature works by composers from the African diaspora, including Florence Price, Quinn Mason, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, and Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges. For more information about the orchestra, visit greenbeltorchestra.org.



Weekly Programs Held at The SPACE

Artrepreneurship, meets Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, 5 to 7 p.m. Four-week program.

Sundays, Sewing Classes, 1:30 to 3 p.m. Open to all skill levels. A limited number of sewing machines is available; participants can also bring their own.

Wednesdays, Beginners Music Classes in Ukulele and Keyboards, 5:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Fridays (1st and 3rd of the month), Free Art for All Game Night, 5 to 7 p.m. Play for fun and gear up for monthly tournaments.

Saturdays, Yoga with René Hood, 10 to 11:30 a.m.; Expressive Art Workshops, 2 to 4 p.m. Space Family Band Jam Session, 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Rainbow Joe is back. Bring an instrument or borrow one from The SPACE and jump into the jam.

All classes are not only enriching but also free and open to the public. The program extends a warm welcome for donations to support its community initiatives.

The SPACE is located upstairs in the former Big Lots space at Beltway Plaza, 6000 Greenbelt Road. Details on upcoming events can be seen on Instagram or Facebook @ TheSPACEFreeArtForAll. For details call 240-244-6115.

Chess Club Meeting

The Greenbelt Chess Club will meet on Tuesday, February 25, at the Youth Center from 6:30 to 8:45 p.m. The club welcomes people of all ages and skill levels. To be added to the club's mailing list, visit tinyurl.com/ycy2nz4m and complete the brief form. Email questions to greenbeltchessclub@gmail.com.

Contemplative Prayer Group Meets Tuesdays

A contemplative prayer group meets on Tuesdays at the Greenbelt Community Church, United Church of Christ, 1 Hillside Road, from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. This gathering is a time to pray in silence for oneself, others and the world. It nurtures inner and outer peace and reinforces the oneness of all people and creation.

The format for this group is an opening introduction, 30 minutes of silence and then some sharing. All are welcome to attend from all denominations and faith traditions. For more information, email Patience Robbins at patience.robbins@gmail.com.

Roosevelt Club Forum

The Eleanor & Franklin Roosevelt Democratic Club invites the public to a dynamic forum analyzing the first month of Donald Trump's second presidency, Unpacking Trump: The First 30 Days. Featuring CASA of Maryland and Maryland State Delegate Ashanti Martinez, the event will explore key policies, impacts and what's ahead. Join the discussion on Friday, February 21 at 7 p.m. in the Greenbriar Terrace Room, 7600 Hanover Parkway.

Français, s'il vous plaît: French at the Café

A group of people interested in speaking French meets at the New Deal Café every Thursday from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. All ages, all levels of fluency are welcome.

Golden Age Club February Schedule

The Golden Age Club meets most Wednesdays at 11 a.m. in Room 201 of the Community Center. The club does not meet when inclement weather delays or closes the Prince George's County schools. Annual dues are now due.

There is one more meeting in February:

February 26 – Carroll Gibbs will be the guest speaker. He is a historian, author, national and international lecturer, and griot. His topic will be African American Men and Women of The Old West. Visit a book dealer to review his books prior to this presentation.

GES Designated For Additional Support

Greenbelt Elementary School (GES) has been designated as an Additional Targeted Support and Improvement (ATSI) School by the Maryland State Department of Education. This designation means that the school will receive additional support to develop and implement a plan to address areas in need of improvement.

GES families can learn more about the designation and improvement plan in a meeting planned for 6 p.m. on Thursday, February 27 at the school. For more information or questions, call 301-513-5911.

Concert Band Will Present A Day at the Cinema

On Sunday, March 9, the Greenbelt Concert Band will present A Day at the Cinema, at the American Legion. The audience can enjoy familiar movie tunes from films including Superman, Home Alone, Raiders of the Lost Ark, Star Wars, Harry Potter and more. Costumes are optional but encouraged. The fun begins at 2 p.m.

Learn more at greenbeltconcertband.org.

No Laughing Matter Cures Winter Blues

Greenbelt Arts Center (GAC) has the perfect prescription to cure the winter blues with No Laughing Matter, a comedy written, produced and directed by local artist Jeff Dunne. In the play two bungling FBI (Federal Bureau of IDIOTS) agents verbally spar with each other throughout their endeavors to catch a spy, a Russian spy. Their focus is on a recent Russian immigrant who is still learning English. His mistakes with the language add to many comedic opportunities.

No Laughing Matter opens Friday, February 21 and plays Fridays and Saturdays at 8 p.m. and Sundays at 2 p.m. through March 8 at the Greenbelt Arts Center, 123 Crescent Road.

On Sunday, March 2, all supporting personnel and audience members are required to wear masks so those who are immunocompromised have an opportunity to see the show. Tickets are required. For more information go to greenbeltartcenter.org.

Garden Club Meeting For Plot Assignment

The Greenbelt Community Garden Club will host its annual Plot Assignment and Membership Meeting on Tuesday, March 4 at 7 p.m. The meeting will be held via Zoom and an email will be sent to returning gardeners with a link to join. Anyone who would like more information about the Garden Club can visit the website at greenbeltgardenclub.com or email the Club President, Ellen Bastio, at gccpres@gmail.com.

Follow your star to the
SECRET CIRCUS
A refuge in troubling times.

This Week at the New Deal Café

SUPPORT Greenbelt's only venue with BOTH dinner AND a show!

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT

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113 Centerway, Roosevelt Center, Greenbelt, MD
Monday, 9am-9pm; Tuesday—Thursday, 9am - 10pm; Friday/Saturday, 9am – 12midnight;
Sunday, 9am – 9pm

TH 2/20	FRI 2/21	SAT 2/22	SUN 2/23
<p style="font-size: 0.8em;">FRENCH CONVERSATION, 5:30p - 6:30pm NEW DEAL CAFE POP-UP! J.Paul & Friends SPCL TIME: 8 - 10pm From NBC's The Voice CLASSIC JAM RETURNS NEXT MONTH</p>	<p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Fast Eddie and The Slowpokes 8-11pm <i>A blend of Chicago, swing & jump blues peppered with soul</i></p>	<p style="font-size: 0.8em;">JAZZ JAM, 2 - 5pm Little Red & The Renegades 8-11pm Zydeco, New Orleans funk & swamp rock</p>	<p style="font-size: 0.8em;">ASL BRUNCH, 10:30 - 12noon Brother Bill Quintet 6 - 8pm Blues & gospel inspired jazz. Soulful, cool, sophisticated and funky</p>
MON 2/24	TUES 2/25	WED 2/26	TH 2/27
<p style="font-size: 0.8em;">NDC QUARTERLY MEMBERS MEETING* 6:30 - 8:30pm ALL ARE WELCOME</p>	<p style="font-size: 0.8em;">NDC Open Mic w/ Carla Monardes 6:30-9:30pm Sign-ups at 6:15p EXPRESS YOURSELF!</p>	<p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Kim's Grand Rounds 7-9pm <i>Songwriters performing their songs in the round</i></p>	<p style="font-size: 0.8em;">FRENCH CONVERSATION, 5:30p - 6:30pm Cadillac Jump Blues Band 7 - 9pm Veteran blues players get the joint jumping</p>

***Join NDC! Go to NewDealCafe(dot) com, click on "ABOUT", then "BECOME A MEMBER OR RENEW!"**

FUNDING FOR THESE ADS PROVIDED BY A GENEROUS DONOR.

DIVERSITY continued from page 1

The community pledge grew out of controversy decades ago. It was drafted by the Community Relations Advisory Board (CRAB) in 1997 in response to a hate flyer distributed in the city. It was then signed by over 700 community members, whose signatures were collected at the Labor Day Festival that year; their names were printed in the News Review (see page 7 of the October 23, 1997, issue). The Community Pledge was adopted in 1997, revised in 2001 and again modified in 2018 (see page 8 of the December 6, 2018, issue).

Council's letter to residents this month stated: "The City Council remains firm in our commitment to the Community Pledge and the values behind it, to being a respectful and welcoming community that celebrates all our residents and treats everyone with dignity, regardless of race, ethnicity, disability, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity or immigration status."

Sharing Resources

City staff have provided a compilation of resources to inform residents of their rights, states the letter, and those are available on the city's website and will also be shared via CARES. The letter was published in English and Spanish, and linked to immigration resources.

No Immigration Tracking

The letter emphasizes that through city offerings, such as

food distribution, senior assistance and counseling, staff will never ask about immigration status, nor track U.S. residency. The Greenbelt Police Department "is not responsible for enforcing immigration laws and does not assist with federal immigration enforcement activities. They will never ask for your immigration status. Please do not be afraid to report criminal activity or reach out for assistance," the letter stated.

A "commitment to making Greenbelt a community welcoming of diversity ... will continue to be a guide for all decisions of the Greenbelt City Council as we consider policies, legal options and resource allocation in these unprecedented and challenging times," concluded the letter from council.

The letter was published after it was submitted by Councilmember Jenni Pompei at the February 10 council meeting. It was unanimously approved by council.

Greenbelt USAID Worker Update

by Anna Bedford-Dillow

The Greenbelt workers we interviewed in the February 5 issue are still employed by USAID, one reinstated from administrative leave and another not placed on it, presumably due to a judge's order halting the administration's actions. The contractor we spoke with had been told he would have his access restored last week

but still has no access to USAID email or systems. "I am still in a valid contract and I have not heard anything (notification) regarding contract cancellation," he told the News Review on Tuesday, February 18. He was paid this week (his pay cycle is for a two-week period with a delay of one week).



Condolences to the family and many friends of Kathleen Gigliotti who died on February 12. Her many works at the Greenbelt Volunteer Fire Department and American Legion Post 136 will not be forgotten.

Send details of your news to editor@greenbeltnewsreview.com.



PHOTO BY MARC MANHEIMER

A hooded merganser at the Lake eats a sunfish for lunch. Yes, she swallowed the fish whole.

Mishkan Torah Celebrates Purim

Mishkan Torah invites everyone to join in their Purim festivities this year on Sunday, March 9 at 11 a.m. Come by for a Purim carnival, with games, crafts, hamantaschen, pizza and fun for kids and adults of all ages. On Thursday, March 13, come back for the annual multilingual Megillah reading and Purim spiel, starting at 7 p.m. Learn more at MishkanTorah.org, and respond with the names of kids and adults attending to RSVP@MishkanTorah.org. This event is free.

ON SCREEN continued from page 2

format that somehow works seamlessly, this kaleidoscopic overview of Pharrell Williams' career is a lively testament to the power of self-belief."

Do the Right Thing

Salvatore "Sal" Fragione (Danny Aiello) is the Italian owner of a pizzeria in Brooklyn. A neighborhood local, Buggin' Out (Giancarlo Esposito), becomes upset when he sees that the pizzeria's Wall of Fame exhibits only Italian actors. Buggin' Out believes a pizzeria in a Black neighborhood should showcase Black actors, but Sal disagrees. The wall becomes a symbol of racism and hate to Buggin' Out and to other people in the neighborhood, and tensions rise.

LISTEN to the NEWS REVIEW
Visually impaired may listen for free
Call Metropolitan Washington Ear
301-681-6636
No special equipment needed



Another Winning Lottery Ticket

A \$50,000 scratch-off prize was claimed this past week by a purchaser who bought it at the local merchant Like on TV on Greenbelt Road.

Holy Cross Lutheran Church
6905 Greenbelt Road
Greenbelt, MD 20770
www.myholycross.org
Sunday Worship: 9:30 A.M.
Bible Study: 11:15 A.M.

Thursday Thrift Store
10:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.

Greenbelt BAPTIST CHURCH

Christ-centered
Biblical
& Reformed

Sunday Morning Worship 10:30am
Sunday School 9:15am

Wednesday Night Bible Study 7:00pm

101 Greenhill Rd. Greenbelt, MD
www.greenbeltbaptist.org



Mowatt Memorial United Methodist Church
40 Ridge Road, Greenbelt

Open hearts, Open Minds, Open doors

Find us on [facebook.com/mowattumc](https://www.facebook.com/mowattumc)

301-474-5410

Pastor Evelyn Romero

Worship Service, Sundays 9:30 - 10:30 a.m.
Celebrate hope with us.

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11040 Baltimore Avenue, Beltsville, MD 20704
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Welcomes you each Sunday for
Worship & Sunday School
at 10:00 AM

Greenbelt Community Church

One Hillside Road

We are an
Open and Affirming
Church



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OF CHRIST

Join Us Sunday

10:15 AM

for Worship
and Church School

www.facebook.com/GCCUCCMD
www.greenbeltcommunitychurch.org

ST. HUGH OF GRENABLE CATHOLIC CHURCH

- Daily Mass: Mon-Fri 7:15am*, Sat 9am*
- Sunday Mass:
 - Sat vigil 5pm*
 - Sun 8am, 9:30am, 11am
- Confessions Saturday 3pm - 4pm.

Masks for the unvaccinated encouraged.

*Live-streamed on Facebook and available on our YouTube page later.

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www.sthughofgrenoble.org

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY OF GREENBELT

Mass Sundays at 10:00 a.m.

COME TO OUR NEW LOCATION

Community Center Room 114

15 Crescent Rd

ALL ARE WELCOME!

A Roman Catholic
Intentional Eucharistic
Community

OR - Join us on ZOOM!
For ZOOM link:
CCG1985+owner@groups.io

"Until humanity as a whole undertakes to establish its affairs on foundations of justice and truth, it is, alas, fated to stagger from one crisis to another."

- Universal House of Justice



Greenbelt Bahá'í Community

www.greenbeltbahais.org

The Bible Says...

I can do all things
through Christ who strengthens me.
Philippians 4:13



Sunday Worship Services
10a-11:15a @ Greenbelt Elementary School
(66 Ridge Rd.)

MCFcc.org

Mishkan Torah Congregation



10 Ridge Road, Greenbelt, MD 20770
Rabbi Saul Oresky, Cantor Phil Greenfield

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Paint Branch Unitarian Universalist Church

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Phone: 301-937-3666 www.pbuuc.org



Welcomes you to our open, nurturing community



February 23, 2025 at 3:00 pm
Can't Buy Me Love?

Anthony Jenkins with Worship Associate Jacqui Walpole

In the spirit of our February theme (Interdependence) and the kickoff of our 2025 PBUUC Stewardship Campaign, we'll explore the concept of money as a currency of love.

Streaming on PBUUC's Facebook page, on Zoom, and in person. Worship service held at University Christian Church, 6800 Adelphi Road, Hyattsville, MD



City Information & Events

The strength of Greenbelt is diverse people living together in a spirit of cooperation. We celebrate all people. By sharing together all are enriched. We strive to be a respectful, welcoming community that is open, accessible, safe and fair.

GREENBELT CITY CALENDAR

Be sure to check out the City calendar for all up to date events at www.greenbeltpg.gov/calendar.



GREENBELT CITY COUNCIL - REGULAR MEETING Monday, February 24 at 7:30 pm

ORGANIZATION
Call to Order
Roll Call
Meditation and Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag
Petitions and Requests
Consent Agenda - Approval of Staff Recommendations (Items on the Consent Agenda [marked by *] will be approved as recommended by staff, subject to removal from the Consent Agenda by Council.)
Approval of Agenda and Additions

COMMUNICATIONS
Presentations
- Reading of the Greenbelt Community Pledge
* Minutes
Administrative Reports
* Committee Reports

LEGISLATION
- An Ordinance to Repeal and Replace Chapter 2, Article IV Ethics Provisions of the Greenbelt City Code; -2nd Reading and Adoption
- Charter Amendment Resolution of the Council of the City of Greenbelt to Amend Section 4 "Creation; Qualifications; Compensation" of the City Charter to Raise the Compensation of the Council; -1st Reading

OTHER BUSINESS
- Rapid Response Task Force - Addressing Economic Impact & Job Loss from Executive Orders
- Review of State/County Legislation
- Council Activities
- Council Reports
* Meetings
* Stakeholders
* Resignation/Appointment to Advisory Board

In advance, the hearing impaired is advised to use MD RELAY at 711 to submit your questions/comments or contact the City Clerk at (301) 474-8000 or email banderson@greenbeltpg.gov.
This agenda is subject to change. For the most up-to-date agenda, visit www.greenbeltpg.gov/municipalTV or call (301) 474-8000.

MEETINGS FOR FEBRUARY 24-28

Tuesday, February 25 at 3:30 pm, **SENIOR CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE, On the Agenda: Discussion on Not for Seniors Only Event**

Tuesday, February 25 at 7 pm, **ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, On the Agenda: Educator Awards Preparations, Proposed FY2026 Budget for City Budget, School Liaisons**

Wednesday, February 26 at 7 pm, **WORK SESSION - PGCPs SUPERINTENDENT HOUSE & STAFF (TENTATIVE)**

Thursday, February 27 at 7 pm, **FOUR CITIES (COLLEGE PARK)**

Thursday, February 27 at 7 pm, **FOREST PRESERVE ADVISORY BOARD, On the Agenda: Stewardship Updates, Rare Plant Protection, Green Man Festival Outreach Exhibit, FPAB Recruitment**

In advance, the hearing impaired are advised to use MD RELAY at 711 to submit your questions/comments or contact the City Clerk at (301) 474-8000 or email banderson@greenbeltpg.gov. This schedule is subject to change. For confirmation that a meeting is being held call (301) 474-8000. For information on public participation for the meetings above, visit the meetings calendar at www.greenbeltpg.gov/calendar.

SENIOR TECH CAFE Sunday, February 23, 1 - 3 pm

Greenbelt Community Center, Room 109, 15 Crescent Road

Whether you're new to computers, iPhones, Androids, or tablets, our friendly volunteers are here to assist you! We're here to guide you and provide support as you explore and get comfortable with your devices and technology. Drop by anytime during our session—no appointment necessary.

Please note: We are not a "Genius Bar" and do not fix devices, but we're more than happy to help you learn how to make the most of your technology!

Contact Priya Gardner Lemieux at pgardner@greenbeltpg.gov, or by calling (240) 542-2056 for more information.

CELEBRATE BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Join us this February as we celebrate black history month with events brought to us by The Greenbelt Black History & Culture Committee, Greenbelt Recreation, and the Prince George's County Office of Human Rights.

Tea with the Ladies of FREED
Friday, February 21, 2 pm, Greenbelt Community Center, Room 103
Tea with the Ladies of FREED (Female Re-enactors of Distinction).

Piece by Piece - Film Screening
Saturday, February 22, 1 pm, Greenbelt Cinema

Greenbelt Cinema and RUAK (Random Unselfish Acts of Kindness) will present a free showing of the 2024 biographical musical comedy film about the life of Pharrell Williams. The film uses LEGO bricks to tell Williams' story.

Greenbelt Orchestra Performance
Sunday, February 23, 3 pm, Greenbelt Community Center

The Greenbelt Orchestra will feature works by composers from the African diaspora including Joseph Bologne, Chevalier de Saint-Georges, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, Quinn Mason, and Florence Price.

Learn about our Black History Month events at www.greenbeltpg.gov/BHM or visit the City's calendar at www.greenbeltpg.gov/calendar.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

In the City of Greenbelt, we remain committed to embracing and celebrating the diversity of all. As our nation undergoes change, feelings of pride, uncertainty, and even fear may arise. Yet, we stand firm in the pledge that has defined Greenbelt since its inception and will not falter.

Community Pledge:

The strength of Greenbelt is diverse people living together in a spirit of cooperation. We celebrate all people. By sharing together all are enriched. We strive to be a respectful, welcoming community that is open, accessible, safe and fair.

Learn more at <https://www.greenbeltpg.gov/government/know-your-rights-immigration-resources>.

JOIN THE CHARTER REVIEW TASKFORCE

Are you passionate about shaping the future of our city? Do you want to have a say in how our local government operates? Now is your chance to make a difference!

The City of Greenbelt is forming a Charter Review Task Force to evaluate and recommend changes to our city's charter. We are looking for dedicated residents who are eager to contribute their time and expertise to this important process.

Submit an application at the following link: <https://www.greenbeltpg.gov/government/boards-committees/application-for-appointment-to-boards-and-committees>.

For more information or to apply, please contact City Clerk at banderson@greenbeltpg.gov or (301) 474-3870.

COMPOST YOUR FOOD SCRAPS

For 6 months your food scraps can be collected for free to reduce food waste and return valuable compost to Greenbelt. Compost Crew will pick up your food scraps weekly and deliver them to their Compost Outpost at Trinity

Questions? Luisa Robles: lrobes@greenbeltpg.gov or (240) 542-2153.

DONATE TO THE PINK PANTRY

Providing free access to menstruation products for low-income residents in Greenbelt. You can help donate by hosting a community drive or through individual donations.

Seeking donations of pads, heat pads, feminine wipes, cotton washcloths, sensitive laundry detergent, sensitive feminine wash, sensitive body wash & bar soap.

Contact Katherine Farzin at (240) 542-2019 or kfarzin@greenbeltpg.gov.

DONATE TO THE GREENBELT NURSERY PROJEKT

Providing support for low-income Greenbelt parents with nursery items. You can help donate by hosting a community drive, through individual donations, or volunteering at our quarterly distribution.

Seeking donations of gentle laundry detergent, laundry detergent pods, basic thermometers, baby/child nail clippers, night lights, and baby proofing products.

Contact Katherine Farzin at (240) 542-2019 or kfarzin@greenbeltpg.gov.

FREE SENIOR PLANET CLASSES - MEDIA & HEALTH FOR ADULTS 60+. FREE. IN-PERSON, 11 AM - 12:15 Greenbelt Community Center, Ground Floor East, 15 Crescent Rd

March 4. Discover Senior Planet
Explore the many groups where you can connect with others.

March 18. Mobile Health Apps
Introducing common health applications on your mobile device.

April 1. Mindfulness Apps
Introducing mindfulness and its physical & mental benefits such as reducing anxiety, improving memory, and lowering blood pressure.

April 15. Messaging Apps
Learn about the most popular messaging apps - iMessages, Google Chat, and WhatsApp - learning how to send texts & pictures, making voice & video calls, and how these apps keep your messages secure.

April 29. Ridesharing Apps
Apps have changed the way people get around! Learn about Uber and Lyft and the pros and cons of both.

May 6. Introduction to AI
Learn basic ideas around artificial intelligence (AI), how it's being used, its limitations, and how it will shape the future.

May 8. AI & Disinformation
Explore how AI is being used to create convincing fakes and clone voices.

May 20. Everyday Uses of AI
Learn how AI is already present in everyday tasks and how its being used across industries so that you can take advantage of the technology.

May 22. Is That AI?
Learn how to differentiate real images versus AI and become a tech savvy internet user by learning to do a reverse image search of images you find online.

These classes are facilitated by Flora Li, Brendy Maddox, and Katherine Farzin. To register, email Kelly Lange at klange@greenbeltpg.gov or call Brendy Maddox at (240) 424-0302.

"IF I WERE MAYOR" ESSAY CONTEST 25TH ANNIVERSARY

This digital essay contest has inspired nearly 50,000 young minds to dream big & learn about local government. The theme for this year's contest is "building community for a new generation."

This contest is open to all Maryland 4th grade students enrolled in the 2024-2025 school year. Essays must be submitted digitally, not exceed 275 words, begin with "If I were mayor," and received no later than March 7, 2025.

Visit <https://bit.ly/3W3nV8G> to learn more.

GREENBELT CITIZENS POLICE ACADEMY

This ten-week program will be held on Thursdays from 6:30 - 8:30 pm beginning March 13, 2025. The Greenbelt Citizens Police Academy (GCPA) offers an engaging way to learn about and interact with the police in a safe classroom setting. The GCPA program includes a combination of classroom instruction and hands-on experience covering various police functions.

We are currently accepting applications. To receive an application, please email rdennis@greenbeltpg.gov by February 24.

PUBLIC STATEMENT REGARDING PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY FIRE/EMS SUMMER STAFFING PLAN FOR GREENBELT VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Greenbelt, MD - The City of Greenbelt is disappointed in the County's decision to reassign 24 career personnel from Greenbelt Station 835 on July 1, resulting in the removal of all career personnel from our Station. County Fire Chief Tiffany Green and County leadership ordered the redeployment of 55 career firefighters from Berwyn Heights, Greenbelt, Bunker Hill, and Bowie Station. We are gravely concerned with the impact in response times of emergencies in Greenbelt and our surrounding areas.

Greenbelt will continue to work in tandem with College Park and Berwyn Heights alongside County leadership in addressing our concerns and fighting for the City of Greenbelt.

WHO CAN I CONTACT?

Office of the County Executive
countyexecutive@co.pg.md.us
(301) 952-4131

Office of the County Fire Chief
tdgreen@co.pg.md.us
(301) 883-5200

At-Large County Council Member Hawkins
At-LargeMemberHawkins@co.pg.md.us
(301) 952-2195

County Council Member District 4
councildistrict4@co.pg.md.us
(301) 952-3094

Letters of Support to keep/return career staffing to Greenbelt Station 835 can be sent to:

City of Greenbelt, 25 Crescent Road, Greenbelt, MD 20770 or council@greenbeltpg.gov.

COMMITTEES & BOARDS VACANCIES VOLUNTEER TODAY!

Volunteering for City of Greenbelt Committees & Boards is an excellent opportunity to engage with your community and make a difference. Choose from a number of committees & boards such as the **Advisory Committee on Trees, Senior Citizens Advisory Committee, the Youth Advisory Committee, or the Advisory Committee on Education, Arts Advisory Board, Board of Elections, Community Relations Advisory Board, Employee Relations Advisory Board, Forest Preserve Advisory Board, Greenbelt Advisory Committee on Environmental Sustainability, or the Park and Recreation Advisory Board** and make a difference in Greenbelt!

Take the first step towards making a positive impact and apply for one of these committee vacancies today! Call (301) 474-8000.

RECOGNITION GROUP APPLICATIONS ARE OPEN

Fiscal Year 2026 Recognition Group applications and policy guide are now available on the City website at <https://www.greenbeltpg.gov/government/recreation-parks/recognition-groups-applications>.

Applications are due by close of business Monday February 3, 2025.

Please call Cathryn Pracht at (240) 542-2196 with any questions.

Council Reviews Quarterly Report from City Manager

by Matthew Arbach

City Manager Josué Salmerón led the quarterly update to council on January 29, highlighting the extensive accomplishments and efforts undertaken by the city's departments.

One question that was asked of each department was how they are responding to the recent freeze on federal funding. The reply from all was that they are mainly in a wait-and-see stance, with specifics yet to be revealed.

Some of the major FY2025 budget initiatives being executed include: a completed Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) negotiation and contract with the city's Police Department; a feasibility study for the Armory redevelopment; a Strategic Marketing Economic Development Plan; a recodification of the city code; as well as the securing of funding for the Greenbelt Aquatic & Fitness Center (GAFC) indoor pool deck repair, the Vision Zero Plan and Hanover Parkway Bikeway Designs. Additional projects include electric vehicle infrastructure and pedestrian/bike improvements.

Enhanced communication with residents continues to be a priority. The process of developing a new website and digital platform has been initiated. A larger on-line audience has been achieved. Constituent Services has reached out to several neighborhoods, such as Franklin Park and Greenbelt Center.

Some other feats were securing a paramedic unit that operates 24/7 at the Greenbelt Fire Department and another with daily service between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. as well as the final encumbrance of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds.

Salmerón said that WSSC has been responsive to the recent water main breaks, with the strategy being to replace as they go. He also pointed out the new carpet and chairs in the main meeting room as well as four new work stations in the Municipal Building.

According to Salmerón, the overall financial condition remains stable, with a FY2025 Adopted Revenue Budget of \$38,031,200 and a FY2025 Adopted Expenditures Budget of \$38,016,000. A \$4.2 million deficit is projected for FY2026.

New Public Works Director Brian Kim revealed that grant funding for replacement of the boilers and chillers in the Community Center has been submitted, with replacement to begin after this heating season and the following season, respectively. Staff has obtained a Certified Playground Safety Inspector Certification.

Kim reported on the challenges at the city's recycling centers with improper and illegal dumping and the resulting contamination of donated items. Clean-up and remediation can be costly. The increased use of cameras and the possible employment of an in-person attendant were proposed as solutions.

Finance Director Bertha Gaymon said that the city received a clean FY2024 audit, as well as a Maryland Government Finance Officers Association Budget Award for the FY2025 budget.

The department continues to provide quarterly ARPA reports until the end of December 2026.

Public Information Director Chondria Andrews said that the city continues to build relationships with local news organizations, as well as (with CASA of Maryland) providing Know Your Rights town halls and podcasts regarding the recent immigration situation. At present, over 4,000 people have attended town halls, both private and public.

Human Resources Director Dawane Martinez shared the recent hiring of a constituent services director, community center supervisor, recreation therapeutic coordinator and an animal service officer. A streamlined new payroll service has been employed, with over 1,800 trainings available.

The Economic Development Department continues to follow its Strategic Plan, which seeks to attract new businesses to the city, as well as enhance organically existing businesses, several of which have grown in size. Said Director John Anthony Mason, these efforts are "a team sport," with healthcare being the city's largest economic sector at 15.96 percent.

The Planning and Community Development Department continues work on several projects, including: the Cemetery Preservation Master Plan, the indoor pool deck at GAFC, the Greenbelt Station path, and off-site road improvements for the relocation of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. Director Terri Hruby said that the department has logged 92 code cases and issued 49 citations, with \$20,900 in fines. Salmerón said that the city is willing to go to the last resort, such as revoking a rental license, to ensure habitability in the city's properties.

The Greenbelt Police Department is still focused on community policing and has completed capital expenditures on new radios and protective equipment. A real-time crime database has been employed, with information available countywide. Chief Richard Bowers explained that the department is only authorized to assist Immigration and Customs Enforcement in cases where a criminal charge is involved, with there being discretion allowed as "to what we focus on."

Recreation Director Greg Varda reported that the Springhill Lake Recreation Center outdoor playground renovation has been completed, as well as placement of a public art piece on Cherrywood Lane. The 2025 Spring and Summer Camp Guide has been released, with registration having started in February. He was excited to reveal the return

of Circus Camp, of which there were a few sessions last year, after a hiatus of several years.

Greenbelt CARES continues its extensive program of services, such as a free flu vaccine clinic and food distributions, along with trainings such as suicide prevention and de-escalation skills. Director Elizabeth Park is now a member of the Maryland State Commission on Juvenile Justice and Reform and Emerging Best Practices, where the focus is to prevent children from ever being involved in juvenile justice to begin with.

Assistant Director Brian Kennell explained that the Information Technology (IT) Department has been active providing security cameras at the Armory, as well as License Plate Recognition cameras in conjunction with the police department. IT has also made improvements to network switch deployment and provided "lit fiber to all buildings where city-owned fiber was constructed." New security to wi-fi networks has been introduced.

Director Carey Eure said that the Grants Department has submitted 13 grant applications in FY2025 totaling over \$13,732,449 and as of December 31, 2024, has received awards of \$40,450 for grants submitted in FY2025.

The evening ended with Tyra Smith, director of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Department. The JEDI Action Team has three new subcommittees, drafted a vision statement and provided three employee town halls. Also, DEI training has been provided to 11 percent of city staff. Two phases of a DEI audit of the city have been completed.



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 EXERCISE, MEMORY STIMULATING ACTIVITIES, 24/7 LIVE IN CARE, & MUCH MORE**
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Chelsea Wood Loses Heat, Electricity and Hot Water

by Erica Johns

All Chelsea Wood residents finally enjoyed heat in their homes when the last broken pipe was repaired on January 30. That lasted until February 12 when a new underground pipe leak caused 22 of 47 buildings to lose heat again.

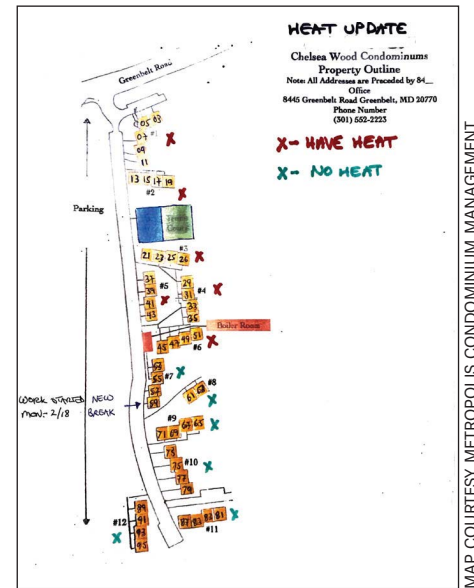
The complex's management company Metropolis Condominium Management notified residents February 12 that the situation would be addressed as soon as possible. Work was reported to have begun February 17.

No Electricity

Adding insult to injury, high winds on Sunday, February 16 caused a power loss at the complex that lasted 24 hours. Residents lost electricity, and so did the boiler building, cutting off heat and hot water throughout the entire complex. Power was restored on the afternoon of Monday, February 17, returning the number without heat to 22.

Communication Delays

On February 15, resident Jessica Fomalont noticed HVAC contractors on site, who told her they were waiting to be told where to work. She called Metropolis and left a message with the answering service. With no response while the contractors continued waiting, she called the answering service again, after which Chelsea Wood maintenance staff called her and she handed her phone to the contractors. Fomalont told the News Review that one option could have been to access the pipe through a condo unit, but the unit's owner wasn't able to accommodate the intrusion that day, leaving underground excavation as the next option. Fomalont



Metropolis sent this heat map to residents on Monday, February 17. The six green Xs at the bottom identify the units without heat. They said work started on Monday to repair the leaking pipe.

said no work occurred that day.

Unresponsive Board

Fomalont said she also called a Chelsea Wood board member for help contacting Metropolis. She said when the board member returned her call, they said she was harassing them and they would block her number.

See HEAT, page 9

NEW LISTINGS!

73D Ridge Road

3 BD | 1 BA | \$225,000
 A roomy, beautifully designed deck and landscaped back yard is one of our favorite things about this peaceful, well-maintained co-op townhome.

11Q Ridge Road

3 BD | 1.5 BA | \$385,000
 Beautifully updated and meticulously cared for Greenbelt co-op home with a half bath on 1st floor!

18N Ridge Road

2 BD | 1 BA | \$220,000
 Stylish, intelligent renovations and updates throughout, including a beautifully modern, compact kitchen and a laundry/storage room with full-sized laundry machines and cabinetry.

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 m 301.789.6294
 kim.kash@compass.com

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Black History Month

Greenbelt Recreation Highlights Leaders of Labor and Civil Rights

by Lois Rosado

Each year the Greenbelt Black History and Culture Committee highlights Black American dignitaries who represent the theme of Black History Month. This year's theme is African Americans and Labor, as designated by the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), the organization founded by Dr. Carter G. Woodson. Thanks to LaToya Fisher from the Recreation Department, pictures and biographies about the four highlighted individuals can be seen weekly on posters in one of Recreation's facilities (Aquatics & Fitness Center, Community Center, Youth Center, Springhill Lake Recreation Center); the posters are shifted between buildings. So, stop, read and learn.

Luminaries



A. Philip Randolph

A. Phillip Randolph, 1889-1979, is best known for organizing the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters union and demanding better working conditions and pay from the Pullman Railroad Company. Randolph was also a key architect of the March on Washington for Jobs and Justice in 1963, which helped usher in the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by former president Lyndon B. Johnson.



Callie House

Callie House, 1861-1928, is known for campaigning for Reparation/Pensions for formerly enslaved individuals. As a homemaker, House worked as a washerwoman and seamstress. In 1891 she read a pamphlet called the Freedmen's Pension Bill: A Plea for American Freedmen. This pamphlet called for pensions and reparations for formerly enslaved people, who were promised 40 acres and a mule, an ordinance blocked by President Andrew Johnson as the Jim-Crow era expanded. House joined Rev. Isaiah Dickerson, a teacher and minister, and formed the National Ex-Slave Mutual Relief Bounty and Pension Association (MRB&PA). They organized formerly enslaved people in North Carolina, Missouri and Louisiana and advocated on behalf of those needing health care, burial costs and pensions for their elder years. Learn what happened when reading her poster. House was a fascinating woman who laid the historical seeds for the current reparations movement.



Bayard Rustin in 1963

Bayard Rustin, 1912-1987, is known for co-establishing the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and for serving as a close advisor to Dr. Martin Luther King. He helped King organize the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). Within a span of two months, Rustin enabled SCLC to galvanize for the March on Washington in 1963. Rustin was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2013. I had the honor of working with Rustin as a member of the Young Adults NAACP Brooklyn chapter, and he helped us organize a citywide school boycott in a conjunction with CORE. The purpose was to ensure that African Americans were appointed to and represented on New York City's school board. He was inspirational and knew how to lift spirits with song and praise when the work became challenging. The man was an awesome community organizer, who knew how to encourage and motivate people to move forward with determination and purpose.



Gloria Richardson in 1964

Gloria Richardson Dandridge, 1922-2021, was from Baltimore and later lived in Cambridge, Md., in Dorchester County. During World War II, Dandridge worked for the federal government but after the war ended, she returned to Cambridge and could not find employment. It was not until the 1960s that she became engaged with the employment and civil rights movement and founded the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee (CNAC). Her organization led desegregation campaigns in housing, schools and jobs. She was one of the first women to head a major civil rights organization.

Take a moment and read more about these remarkable Americans when visiting the posters located in the Recreation buildings.

- Photos courtesy Wikipedia

A WORLD OF WONDER

Heaven is the canvas
you're under
Stars will be shining below!
At the SECRET CIRCUS

SLAVERY continued from page 1

Waters. Testifying on their behalf was a white man named Benjamin K. Morsell, a merchant, judge and politician in Washington who had a country home in Greenbelt (Montebello, near the water tower).

The involvement of Morsell suggested the Waters family's Greenbelt connection. The proof of that was found in the probate records of Samuel Turner, whose family cemetery is preserved on Ivy Lane. He lived at Turner's Discovery, along Ridge Road, just east of Morsell's home. He conditionally emancipated "Vachal" in his will in 1801. The relevant provision reads: "I bequeath to my wife Susanna ... my Negro man named Vachal for the term of eight years and then to be free." Turner's subsequent estate inventory listed both a Vachel (age 24) and a Flora (no age given), almost certainly the same couple with the surname Waters named years later in the D.C. records.

It is fair to ask what moved Turner to emancipate Vachel. We can only speculate. Turner was a Methodist, a denomination which at that time was intensifying its opposition to slavery. Also, the labor-intensive tobacco economy was on the wane in northern Prince George's County. Slave labor was not needed for the crops replacing tobacco. Turner's estate inventory, in fact, listed no crops at all. He raised livestock and operated a blacksmithing business. Whether it was a sense of justice, religious conviction, economic realism or something else that caused Turner to free Vachel Waters is lost to history.

How did Vachel and Flora Waters come to the Turner household? The documentary record is clear for Flora, less so for Vachel.

Flora came to Greenbelt from the household of John Chew Thomas, a former Congressman. Thomas' wife Mary Snowden inherited part of Snowden's Discovery, a sprawling tract of land in Greenbelt. They already had a home in Anne Arundel County, so they sold off Snowden's Discovery in several parcels. The buyer of one of the parcels in 1800 was Turner. Along with the land, Turner and his wife Susanna hired Flora from Thomas. Flora was "in possession of the widow Turner" (though still owned by Thomas) when Thomas emancipated her and her four children by a deed of manumission in 1810. So the evidence indicates that Vachel and Flora met in the household of the Turners of Greenbelt. Whether Thomas emancipated Flora in 1810 in response to Vachel's emancipation

is not known. He conditionally emancipated more than 30 other enslaved men, women and children at the same time. Religion might have played a role, for he was a Quaker, another anti-slavery sect.

Vachel's path to the Turners was less direct. It started at Jericho, a tobacco plantation on the Patuxent River near old Bowie. Jericho was owned by John Waters (1698-1774), one of the largest slaveholders in northern Prince George's County. When his estate was inventoried, 12 enslaved people were named, including a man named Vachel (age 21) and a woman named Rachel (age 19). Rachel's name next appears 11 years later (age 30) in 1786 on the estate inventory of Waters' daughter Mary Waters Williams. A widow who owned no land herself, Mary seems to have lived her later years on the upper reaches of Beaverdam Creek in what is now the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, where her adult sons owned plantations. Besides Rachel, four enslaved children also appeared on Mary's estate inventory. The oldest was named Vachel (age 8). He most likely was the same 24-year-old Vachel on Samuel Turner's inventory 16 years later. Why he moved from the Williams household to Turner's is not known, but the families knew each other. Williams' son John was a partner with Samuel Turner in the blacksmithing business.

The Waters family story is not as simple as a family enslaved and then freed. Vachel and Flora had four children before they were emancipated, meaning those children were born into slavery. John Chew Thomas emancipated Flora immediately, but he set conditions on her children's freedom: her boys Benjamin, Greenbury and James at age 28, daughter Ariana at age 25. So even though Vachel and Flora became free in 1809 and 1810, their four eldest children (all then below the age of eight) were not. When Susanna Turner died in 1819, they were listed on her estate inventory. When her estate was liquidated, their remaining terms of service were purchased by Susanna's children and their neighbor Benjamin K. Morsell. From the D.C. Register of Free Negroes we know that Vachel and Flora had at least two more children born after they became free, Peter and Elizabeth. Those children, unlike their older siblings, were thus born free. The household was a mixed one of both free and enslaved members.

Five of Vachel and Flora Waters' children relocated to Washington, D.C. The child whose life

is best documented is their eldest daughter Ariana (usually called Airy), born enslaved. Her term of servitude did not end until about 1830, when Morsell vouched for her free status. Her freedom certificate reads: "Airy was born the property of Susanah Turner of Prince George's County, Maryland, with whom she served until Turner's death [1819], and then was purchased by Morsell. She has finished her time of servitude in Washington with Morsell and is free."

By then Ariana was married to a man named William Dodson and her name was Ariana Dodson. She appears as a free woman and the head of a household in the 1840, 1850 and 1860 censuses for the District of Columbia. In the 1862 Washington city directory she is listed as the widow of William Dodson, occupation washer woman. An older woman named F. Waters was living with her in 1850, possibly her mother Flora from Greenbelt. No further record of Ariana has been found after 1862. The stories of Vachel and Flora Waters' other children have not yet been traced.

The Waters family story in Greenbelt and Washington is far from complete. We know nothing of their inner lives, their hopes, fears, joys, heartbreaks or aspirations. But the fragmentary details that have been recorded present a glimpse into the lives of an enslaved African American family whose paths to freedom were set in motion in Greenbelt.

Alan Virta

Alan Virta was chairman of the Prince George's County Historic Preservation Commission from 1982 to 1986. He is author of the book Prince George's County: A Pictorial History, published by Donning in 1984. He also wrote Chapter 1: Prologue for the book Greenbelt, History of a New Town: 1937-1987, Mary Lou Williamson, editor, published by Donning in 1987, telling the story of who lived in the area that became Greenbelt. He served as a member of the Greenbelt 50th Anniversary Committee, on the board of directors of Friends of the Greenbelt Museum and as editor of the monthly newsletter of the Prince George's County Historical Society. A lifelong county resident, Virta is a graduate of the University of Maryland and a member of the staff of the Library of Congress. He lived in Greenbelt from 1977 for more than 10 years before moving to Boise, Idaho.

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COUNTY EXEC continued from page 1

Many of the candidates emphasized the need for improved recruitment efforts to enlist more firefighters and EMS personnel to help with the staffing shortage. Most candidates were non-committal on making any change to leadership until they could assess the situation for themselves, although candidate Tonya Sweat did say she would look to make a change in leadership if elected. Most said they'd work to reinstate the reallocated career firefighters.

Below are the candidates' responses.

**Aisha Braveboy
(Democrat)**

As County Executive, I will review the leadership of the entire county public safety team, including the fire department. And yes, I would commit to returning career staff to Greenbelt, but all the while mindful of the current county budget crisis of \$175 million and growing. In addressing the staffing crisis, we must pioneer new, better recruitment efforts, and begin to grow our next generation of career firefighters from here in the county, such as with the cadet firefighter program in our county school system.

**Ron Hunt
(Democrat)**

Hunt's response was dictated over the phone and edited for length

I don't want to say I'm changing any leadership because I have not looked at him. I have only looked at other departments, which, if I am elected, I will change, but I have not addressed the fire department. I believe there's a reason why people were removed from different fire departments or different positions in different places. I need to know why. I know one thing for a fact - you have volunteer firefighters here, which are heroes. Then you got a lower number of firefighters that are being paid. And the question is, do we need more or less? My point is, I have to know why they let these people go. Now if they're doing it because they're saying it's a budgetary problem, the budgetary problem is the people that are doing it. They have no idea of how they're spending money. Now, I'm not a politician, nor do I want to be one. I've been doing business for many years, and there are certain things I don't put up with. All the candidates are saying it's not a popularity contest. But yeah, I'm very popular with the Black community, I am. I own the biggest nightclubs in the city for more than 30 years. What did the community want? Did the community want those firemen taken away? If they didn't, why are

they gone? Give me a good reason. And if you're saying to me, because we can't afford them, if they were there at one point we could afford them. So why can't we afford them now?

**George McDermott
(Republican)**

The Greenbelt volunteer fire department never should have been shut down. The reconstruction of the facility could've been done leaving the facility opened and operational. Even if it meant putting temporary trailers and living facilities on site during some of the renovations. The volunteer base and Greenbelt and all of the firehouses throughout the county is really the backbone that has protected our citizens.

The new County Executive needs to have an audit done regarding the planning cost, construction cost, relocation cost associated with the manpower reassignments. The public has a right to know, the firefighters have a right to know and especially the volunteers who started this fire station, I believe in 1947. Overall the county must do a better job of working with these volunteers and be grateful for their service.

**Moisette Tonya Sweat
(Democrat)**

I believe a leadership change is necessary in the Fire/EMS Department. The department requires a fire chief who is committed to leading a combination system and permitting volunteer firefighters and emergency medical practitioners to augment the services provided by career personnel. While the human resources are limited, we must redistribute career first responders equally throughout the county to ensure we preserve life and property. I will also work with new leadership to improve recruiting of both career and volunteer first responders.

**Alonzo Washington
(Democrat)**

As County Executive, I will

address the staffing crisis in the Fire/EMS Department by prioritizing the return of career firefighters to Greenbelt and other affected stations. My plan includes accelerating recruitment efforts to fill the firefighter deficit and re-evaluating resource allocation strategies to avoid overburdening personnel. My administration will be data-driven, and I will conduct a thorough review of departments countywide to ensure our public safety needs are being met.

**Jonathan White
(Republican)**

I am committed to reinstating career firefighters in Greenbelt and addressing the staffing challenges within Prince George's County Fire Department (PGFD). The removal of career staff from Greenbelt and other stations has created significant service gaps, posing risks to public safety. This decision, being short-sighted, must be reversed. To resolve the staffing crisis, I will prioritize firefighter recruitment and retention by offering competitive salaries, enhanced benefits and additional hiring incentives. I will collaborate with the County Council to secure the necessary funding for increasing personnel and ensuring that PGFD is adequately staffed to meet the rising service demands. Furthermore, I will initiate a leadership review of PGFD to assess if changes are required to improve morale, efficiency and decision-making. If leadership adjustments are essential to restore trust and efficacy, I will proceed accordingly.

My objective is to reconstruct a fire department that both residents and first responders can rely on.

Early Voting

Early voting for the March 4 primary election begins on February 26.

Diya Shah and Ryan Colasanti are students at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism interning with the News Review.

Who Has the Money? County Executive Candidates Report

by Kit Slack, Streetcar Suburbs News

Candidates for Prince George's County Executive have filed their first campaign finance reports for the March 4 primary election race.

Below, candidates are listed from the highest campaign account balance to the lowest. This snapshot is based on campaign finance reports filed by the February 4 deadline and a review of contributions in December and January.

To take a more detailed look at contributions to candidates, search the state campaign finance website at campaignfinance.maryland.gov/Public/ViewReceiptsMain.

Aisha Braveboy

Prince George's County State's Attorney Aisha Braveboy had about \$379,000 in her campaign account as of January 28 and had raised about \$325,000 from 375 donors since December 1. Braveboy spent far more than any other candidate from January 9 to 28 - \$200,000, including \$25,000 on phone banking, over \$100,000 on television ads and \$6,000 on robocalls.

Braveboy's campaign received \$6,000 from Corridor Wine in Laurel and at least \$42,000 from members of the family of David Trone, the liquor magnate who lost to Angela Alsobrooks in the primary for the U.S. Senate seat last spring.

Braveboy also received at least \$30,000 from donors in the health care industry, particularly home health care services, since December 1.

Northeast Maglev, which has been seeking approval for a high-speed train line through Prince George's County, contributed \$5,000 to her campaign.

A political action committee called the We Are Labor 2 PAC contributed just over \$79,000 to Braveboy's campaign on Janu-

ary 31, past the timeframe for reporting.

Calvin Hawkins

At-large County Councilmember Calvin Hawkins had about \$192,000 in his campaign account on January 28. He had raised the most money from the largest number of donors since December 1, about \$337,000 from nearly 600 donors. Over \$50,000 came from 11 donors in the construction and real estate industries.

Hawkins spent a total of \$116,000 from January 9 to 28, including \$26,000 on printing, \$25,000 on campaign staff and consultants, \$23,000 on phone banking and \$12,000 for office rental.

Rushern Baker

Former County Executive Rushern Baker had just under \$97,000 in his campaign bank account on January 28 and had raised about \$146,000 from about 260 donors since December 1. Three donors in security services gave a total of \$12,000 to his campaign, and four donors in the real estate and construction industries gave a total of \$13,500. Baker received an additional \$6,000 from the campaign funds of County Councilmember Sidney Harrison (District 9) and also received donations of services for campaign texting and for video. Baker spent almost \$44,000 on media and over \$3,000 on compensation for campaign workers from January 9 to 28.

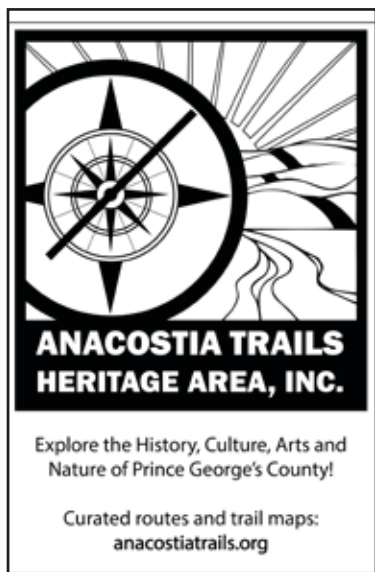
See FINANCES, page 9

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Police Blotter

Incidents reported here occurred February 10-16, 2025. Readers are encouraged to contact the police if they have information that may aid in an enquiry. Call the non-emergency number 301-474-7200 or email pd@greenbeltnmd.gov. Times provided are when the incidents were reported.

Incident Summary

Greenbelt Police reported one incident requiring Child Protective Service; three mental health diversions, one involving attempted suicide; and four domestic incidents, one involving threats and two leading to arrest.

On February 13 near 8017 Mandan Road, an unsupervised child was heard crying in the hallway during a power outage; a friend watched the child until the mother's arrival.

On February 13 near 8001 Lakecrest Drive, a dog was heard barking inside a vacant apartment. No humans were in the apartment, but there were puddles and fecal matter all over the floor. The dog was taken to the animal shelter, and a notice was left on the door.

On February 13 near 6400 Ivy Lane, housekeeping staff cleaning a room found a firearm, and police notified the registered owner.

Robbery

On February 13 at 6:02 p.m. near 6000 Greenbelt Road, a man brandishing a knife stole a man's wallet and left on foot toward the rear of the mall.

Break-in

On February 10 near 6400 Cherrywood Lane, a storage unit had the door handle broken and many packages damaged inside the unit.

Disorderly

On February 11 at 5:28 p.m. near 6000 Greenbelt Road, mall security saw a disorderly woman causing a scene. She pushed a shopping cart into an officer and kicked another. She was taken into custody and transported to the Department of Corrections in Upper Marlboro.

DUI Arrest

On February 15 at 11:35 p.m. near 3 Court Research Road, a witness saw someone drive a vehicle into a tree. The driver admitted that she had been drinking; she showed multiple signs of impairment and was arrested and charged with DUI.

Theft and Shoplifting

On February 10 near Lakeside Drive and Crescent Road, a man had dropped two checks into a blue USPS mailbox. He was contacted by the Prince George's County Police, who had found his checks on a suspect they had arrested. The case report was shared with the United States Postal Inspection Service.

On February 14 at 7:08 p.m. near 6301 Golden Triangle Drive, someone took money from a man's wallet.

Packages were stolen February 13 near 14 Parkway and February

16 near 6106 Breezewood Court.

On February 11 at 1:15 p.m. near 7607 Greenbelt Road, two women stole items.

On February 15 at 7:48 p.m. near 6062 Greenbelt Road, a man and woman stole merchandise and drove off in a white Honda Accord coupe.

Vehicle Crimes Stolen Vehicles

Four vehicles were stolen on February 11 near 6233 Springhill Drive, a 2014 Hyundai Sonata (Md. 81108CK); and near 5907 Cherrywood Lane, a silver 2012 Honda Civic (Md. 7BB8255); on February 14 near 7605 Mandan Road, a 2015 GMC Yukon (Ga. RVV2647); and on February 16 near 7722 Hanover Parkway, a red 2024 Honda Civic (temp Md. T2153112).

Theft from Auto

On February 12 near 7500 Mandan Road, a front wheel came off when the vehicle began to move, because the lug nuts had been removed.

On February 13 near 9266 Edmonston Road, the tags were stolen from a 2019 Toyota Camry.

On February 13 near 7501 Greenway Center Drive, two work vehicles had side panels removed.

On February 14 near 9109 Springhill Lane, a door was ripped off a 2017 Hyundai Elantra, and the contents of the vehicle were rummaged through.

On February 14 near 9150 Edmonston Road, a 2016 Hyundai Sonata had a door handle broken and items stolen.

On February 14 near 9150 Edmonston Road, a 2019 Chevrolet Equinox had a window broken and items taken.

Pedestrian Struck, Killed Near Greenway Center

At 11:30 p.m. on February 5, patrol officers and members of Greenbelt's Crash Analysis Reconstruction Unit responded to a vehicle collision involving a pedestrian struck near the 7500 block of Greenbelt Road. The pedestrian, Tejan Bah, 34, of Greenbelt, was transported to a local hospital where he later succumbed to his injuries.

Greenbelt Road was temporarily closed westbound from the entrance of Greenway Shopping Center, located at 7501 Greenbelt Road, to Southway.



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FINANCES continued from page 8

Alonzo T. Washington

State Senator Alonzo T. Washington (District 22) had \$81,000 in his campaign bank account on January 28. Since December 1, he had raised about \$37,000 from about 160 donors, most of them small donations from addresses in his district. The largest donation he received was \$2,500 from the campaign of Bill Ferguson, a state legislator from Baltimore. Washington spent about \$2,000 from January 9 to 28 on compensation for campaign workers.

Tonya Sweat

Moisette Tonya Sweat had about \$11,000 in her campaign account on January 28. She had raised about \$13,000 since December 1 from nearly 50 donors. She spent \$1,600 between January 9 and 28 on media, printing and campaign materials. Her largest donations were \$6,000 from Peter Oliver Kreuger, a consultant from Silver Spring and \$2,000 from Joann McDonald, a Bowie resident and retired bookkeeper for Prince George's County Public Schools.

Ron Hunt

Ron Hunt had over \$3,000

in his bank account on January 28 and had spent over \$6,000 on direct mail since January 9. He made a loan of \$9,500 to his campaign on January 13.

Marcellus Crews and Albert Slocum did not file the reports by the February 4 deadline, and their most recent campaign finance reports show minimal balances.

Republican Candidates

In heavily Democratic Prince George's County, Republican candidates are not raising much money. Jonathan White and George McDermott filed statements showing that contributions and expenditures for each of their campaigns were less than \$1,000. Jesse Peed failed to file the report by the February 4 deadline, but an annual statement he filed January 15 shows a bank account balance under \$1,000.

Kit Slack is the executive director of Streetcar Suburbs Publishing. This article first appeared in Streetcar Suburbs News (streetcarsuburbs.news/who-has-the-money-county-exec-candidates-report) and is reprinted with permission.

HEAT continued from page 6

Fomalont said she experienced similar responses from another board member when the heat first failed in November 2024. She said that when she contacts elected officials, they always ask if she has contacted board members.

The News Review emailed Metropolis on February 1 inquiring about their plans to address Chelsea Wood's aging infrastructure, with no response received to date.

On February 13 resident Jocelyn Cox requested support in an email to state and county officials including Maryland State Senator Alonzo Washington, County Councilmember Eric Olson, their staff and the Prince George's Community Relations/Common Ownership Communities office. Her previous outreach to them (she estimated seven previous emails) produced no substantive results. Her February 13 email said, "Our complex is without

heat again. ... I'm wondering if any assistance is available to us. If there is nothing, I'd rather be told that than be left in the dark."

She asked if bail-out programs exist for condominiums in financial ruin, writing, "I don't see an end in sight if the cause of our lack of heat (and potentially AC in the summer) is delinquency. Is there a precedent? And if you all are not the people to speak with, ... point me in the right direction!" She wrote to fellow residents "It doesn't seem like local/state officials are willing to help. ... Owners have been contacting officials since December, and it doesn't seem to make a difference."

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2019 Honda Civic
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City Notes

The city manager, CARES, Recreation and Police were briefed by the Maryland Field Office Director of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) regarding enforcement operations. The mayor, city manager and over 40 participants attended Greenbelt's Know Your Rights event featuring elected officials and CASA representatives.

The grant coordinator researched city grants impacted by the federal funding freeze and corresponded with federal and state representatives regarding this impact.

Economic Development helped two businesses with regulatory permitting and met with New Deal Café ownership about small business luncheons.

Recreation and Arts facilitated Artful Afternoons and other Black American History Month events. Springhill Lake Recreation Center welcomed Pre-K Bilingual Story Time and the Community Center hosted a blood drive.

Therapeutic Recreation took seniors to the National Museum of African American History and Culture and met with Mid-Atlantic Off-Road Enthusiasts about adaptive biking.

The CARES director testified at the Juvenile Services Budget hearing before the Maryland Senate Budget and Tax, Public Safety subcommittee.

CARES Needs Fund Donations

The Greenbelt Emergency Assistance Fund continues to be a safety net for Greenbelters in a financial crisis whatever the reason. Those who are able can help by donating to the fund.

Make checks out to Greenbelt CARES, write Emergency Assistance Fund in the memo space and mail to Greenbelt CARES, 25 Crescent Road, Greenbelt, MD 20770 (or place in the secure drop box at that address). Or, go to GreenbeltMD.gov, click Pay Online at the top of the page and choose Charitable Donations.

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UTILITY BILLS continued from page 1

investment costs faster, making delivery charges rise even more steeply.

For natural gas, billed similarly, delivery cost also reflects companies updating their infrastructure, but because the cost of natural gas itself has gone down the increase is less visible.

Electricity

Below, for comparison, we use the total of the bill Pepco and Washington Gas would send their customers.

The Office of the People's Counsel, State of Maryland, showed that in 2024, a consumer using an average of 900 kWh per month with Pepco would pay ~\$2,000 total for the year. For the same amount of power BGE would cost \$1,900, Delmarva ~\$2,100, Potomac Edison ~\$1,320 and SMECO ~\$1,470. Pepco, BGE and Delmarva are all subsidiaries of Chicago-based Exelon Corporation and all three are more expensive than Potomac Edison and SMECO – the other two companies serving Maryland.

SMECO is the Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative, formed in 1937. Potomac Edison did not increase its electricity prices from 1994 to 2018 though they have risen steadily since, but they are still only about 65 percent of Delmarva's. Potomac Edison's parent company has its own generating plants but the other companies purchase a much larger share of the power they distribute.

Why the Rise in Supply Costs?

Maryland has shut down several power stations in the last several years as it switches away from coal. As a result, more power must be bought from out-of-state generators, especially in extreme weather when both demand and prices are higher. The three Exelon companies buy

most of their power, and though SMECO has its own solar farm it also purchases the majority of its power (but still keeps its prices down). Potomac Edison (owned by First Energy) generates its own power in Virginia and West Virginia and is less affected by prices on the open market.

Natural Gas Prices

A somewhat different story emerged with natural gas. Washington Gas, which serves Greenbelt, was the lowest-cost Maryland supplier on the basis of the total bill to consumers. The same Office of the People's Counsel study cited above shows them at ~\$1,100 for an annual household consumption of 940 therms (total bill). BGE and Columbia Gas both came in at ~\$1,400 for the same level of consumption. This may, alas, be a Pyrrhic victory because Washington Gas is not upgrading its infrastructure at the same speed as the other utilities, which may mean that rapidly escalating delivery charges await in the future when it attempts to catch up.

Accelerating Energy Costs

The Office of the People's Counsel study concludes that part of the reason for accelerating cost increases is that the utility companies are being allowed by state regulators to recoup increased infrastructure costs on an accelerated schedule. It recommends that this practice be discontinued. Additional power generation facilities in Maryland have also been cited as essential to keep prices down.

The information presented here is a small fraction of the study. The full report is available on the web at tinyurl.com/y8z6brbj.

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Tuesday's Town Hall Offers Help With High Utility Bills

by Cathie Meetre

The Utility Providers Town Hall meeting on February 18 related little to the complaints rife on social media about high utility bills. All of the four organizations represented (Pepco, Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development Division of Energy, Maryland Energy Administration and WSSC) gave information about how to get help paying bills or replacing inefficient equipment but did not explain the steep escalation in Pepco electricity costs.

One point made was that the surcharge for EMPower that is part of the hike in the bills is

what pays for many of the subsidies. So EMPower is essentially a tax on all electricity consumers to subsidize those who qualify for assistance rather than a contribution by the utility companies. In a perhaps bizarre twist, an individual whose income is too high to qualify can pay \$700 to be admitted to the EMPower subsidies.

Those interested in assistance can go to Pepco.com and complete a questionnaire that will identify all programs for which they qualify via Pepco or other organizations. Other items that came up in the meeting will be dealt with in a subsequent article.



Erik Herrera and Fernando Herrera have fun during the snow day on February 12.

PHOTO BY BELEN HERRERA

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Youth Musical Production Of Secret Circus in March

by Leo Casalini



PHOTO COURTESY GREENBELT RECREATION

From left, Kira Wilkinson, Mari Loucaides, Caspaen Jackson, Hannah Baker and Levi Baker are among the 29 young actors in the 2025 Greenbelt Youth Musical, *Secret Circus*.

“Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls, welcome to the Circus Magnifique!” – all will be welcome and all will be amazed at this new show in town that’s fit to leave you dazed. The Greenbelt Youth Musical, an annual program going on its 26th anniversary, has once again come around. This year’s installment: *Secret Circus*.

A story set in the 1940s in Eastern Europe during the Second World War, *Secret Circus* follows a band of outcasts, unusuals and prodigies all set on crossing the border. That’s the only chance one would have at escaping the wrath of the Paper Dolls, which is sure to beset all who choose to stay. But even life doesn’t stop for war and for a troupe, the majority of whom are young performers, one can often eclipse the other. As personal spats threaten overall survival, the circus must learn what it means to stick together if they are to have a chance of reaching their ultimate goal of getting to safety.

The Youth Musical has long been beloved by its many alumni, a notion that was reinforced by Shawford Jackson, a returning actor in this year’s production. He said that last year’s show was the highlight of his year. Jackson wishes the program could be held more than once per year, saying

“This is a space where I can just be myself,” a very similar sentiment to that of the circus.

Vying to be truly understood and loved for who they are, the misfits are simply people after all, despite a few additional quirks. And when it’s truly looked at, how sure can one be that life, in its own way, isn’t its own circus, fit with its own eight billion clowns, an endless menagerie of animals and spectacles galore? Shouldn’t simply existing guarantee you a right to join in the act? That is the question of *Secret Circus*.

All performances will be held in the Community Center gym, with showings on Saturday, March 1 at 7 p.m.; Sunday, March 2 at 3 p.m.; and Saturday, March 8 at 2 and 7 p.m. Tickets are available for purchase at the Community Center’s business office. Productions have a record of selling out quickly, so purchasing sooner rather than later is recommended.

Leo Casalini is a senior at Northwestern High School writing for the News Review.



Presidents Day Protesters Gather In D.C., Annapolis, Greenbelt

by Anna Bedford-Dillow

On Monday, February 17, a federal holiday in honor of Presidents Day, many people gathered in the nation’s capital and elsewhere in protest. While some Greenbelters headed to D.C. and Annapolis, some protested closer to home. At noon, approximately 35 people assembled in front of the Municipal Building, holding signs, waving to cars at the intersection and singing.

With a tambourine accompaniment, there were tuneful renditions of *This Land Is My Land*, *If I Had a Hammer* and *We Are Climbing Jacob’s Ladder*, among others. Signs proclaimed, *Defend Democracy*, *Say No to President Musk*, *Stand Up GOP*, *Not My President*, *Neither Is Our President*, *Billionaires Fear the People: Let’s Prove Them Right*, and more than one *Honk for Freedom!* Many cars did honk, as did a bus. Drivers and passengers waved and pumped fists and the gathered group cheered despite the fierce wind.

One attendee said she was there in support of the 14th Amendment, which guarantees birthright citizenship, equal pro-



PHOTO BY ANNA BEDFORD-DILLOW

Protesters display their signs in front of the Mother and Child statue.

tection under the law and due process, among other things. She expressed frustration over divisiveness and wanted people united for democracy. The Greenbelt protesters expressed concern over executive overreach as well as checks and balances for federal workers and for immigrants. One attendee at the rally was also concerned for the arts and for the workers at the Kennedy Center. Another protester, Melanie, was

part of a group called Third Act, which she described as an alliance of people over age 60 interested in defending democracy; she’d been at a Tesla dealership protesting against Elon Musk over the weekend.

After almost an hour, the protesters marched from the Municipal Building to Roosevelt Center, where a photo of the group was taken near the Mother and Child statue before they disbanded.

Point of View

Hearing from the Unseen: Commitment to Community

by Susan Taylor

Greenbelt is an historic community with a mixed past. And, it is a contemporary city with a growing and deepening commitment to all who live here.

Greenbelt has a blossoming population of all generations and has been designated as a NORC – naturally occurring retirement community – a place where people age in place.

Greenbelt’s Pledge

“The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members,” observed Coretta Scott King.

Greenbelt’s Community Pledge states: “The strength of Greenbelt is diverse people living together in a spirit of cooperation. We celebrate all people. By sharing together all are enriched. We strive to be a respectful, welcoming community that is open, accessible, safe and fair.”

Recreation Builds Community

Unlike other jurisdictions in Maryland, Prince George’s County does not share after-school access to school buildings and outdoor amenities. Local communities like Greenbelt must construct and maintain separate facilities and programs to meet the wide needs of their population.

The Greenbelt Recreation Department is creative, visionary and practical in aiming “not only to enrich the individual, but to help build community.”

Constructing each seasonal menu of activities to reach into the city’s neighborhoods with limited resources takes skill, imagination and consideration. Greenbelt Recreation offers activities in history, arts, sports, camps and special events for individuals and groups across life spans and



PHOTO BY SUSAN TAYLOR

Aqua Mania instructor Trevin Green fills the pool with positive fitness energy.

experience spans.

The recent exploration of resources – looking for possible pool capacity in Greenbelt East and Greenbelt West to support those who swim, from babies to elders – is just one example of the flexible intelligence and caring of Recreation leadership.

Recreation for All

One of the unseen, or underseen, segments of Greenbelt’s recreation-using population are folks living with limited mobility, disabilities, chronic illnesses and disease. Members of this cohort recently discussed their use of, and dependence upon, the literally life-saving pool.

Amber Massey declared, “I can’t function without the pool. I use it for physical therapy and pain relief and community. It keeps me strong so it’s easier to get around.”

“The pool helps to maintain physical as well as mental well-being for our entire community,” said Cathy Rodgers. Karen Hess spoke of the well-known benefits

of regular exercise “for medical and social well-being.” Rodgers added, “From core strengthening to mind, body and soul, it serves as a catalyst to uplift our spirits. I have met so many wonderful people at the pool over these past 20 years.”

“The pool has made a tremendous effect on my life,” mentioned Katie Hagins. “The employees bend over backward to help me. The ability to swim is saving my life and making me healthier every day.”

“[Greenbelt Recreation] staff and patrons are like a family that has made my life so much better than I thought it could be,” praised Hagins. Hess inserted, “Our pool community takes care of each other!”

Crisis Hotline’s Number is 988

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline dialing code is 988. Calls and text messages are confidential and free.



PHOTO BY IAN BLACKWELL ROGERS

Deacon Melissa Sites, chair of the Creation Care Committee of the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, takes Chesapeake Climate Action Network’s Polar Bear Plunge in the Northeast Branch of the Anacostia on Saturday, February 15, raising over \$1,000.