



COMMUNITY NEWS

Together Strengthening Our Community

Spring 2008 Edition

ERIC OLSON -DISTRICT 3 PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY COUNCIL

Dear Neighbors,

I wanted to update you on what is happening in District 3, and encourage you to reach out to my office if there is anything we can do to assist you. There is much to report on for the last six months. My staff and I have been busy on a variety of fronts over the winter and spring, and a lot is happening in our County.

In recent months, my office has maintained its focus on quality of life issues and we have collaborated with neighborhoods and municipalities to successfully fight two proposed alcohol licenses from being granted in locations that could have added to public safety problems.

My office has also been working on numerous proposed development projects as well as community planning processes to guide future development. My priorities for development projects are to ensure strong public participation, tough environmental standards, quality construction, and to be mindful of impacts on schools, traffic and quality of life for existing neighborhoods.

Through May, the County Council will deliberate on the budget for the next fiscal year. This will not be an easy year since there will be significantly fewer resources available to address county needs.

Our community is also deeply disturbed by the stabbing of a Parkdale High School student in April. I am working on a number of efforts to increase attention on youth and gang violence prevention efforts.

Inside this newsletter, I have included information about each of the topics above and more that we are working on for Prince George's County. As always, please do not hesitate to contact my office if there is anything that we can help address for you.

Sincerely,

Eric Olson
Council Member, District 3
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EOlson@co.pg.md.us

Si desea recibir el boletín de noticias en español, por favor llame al número: 301-952-3060.

*We have a new, easier website domain name:
www.co.pg.md.us/District3
Please visit our website for County information.*



Councilman Olson attends swearing in of new Americorps members at the Maryland Multicultural Youth Center in Riverdale Heights.



Chuckwunonso "Angel" Dureke, Parkdale High School's student government president and member of the Prince George's County Youth Commission, joins Councilman Olson at the annual women's history luncheon.



Councilman Olson walks with residents of Dresden Green to discuss community concerns.

Senator Gwendolyn T. Britt: A Local Hero (1941 - 2008)



On January 12th, Prince George's County lost a true hero. Senator Britt lived in the Bellmead neighborhood of District 3 and represented the residents of the 47th Legislative District in the State Senate since 2003.

As a young woman, she fought segregation and traveled as a Freedom Rider to the Deep South. In 1961, she spent 40 days in a Mississippi jail for sitting in a whites-only area of a train station. She was one of the brave people who integrated Glen Echo Park and other regional establishments.

She was in politics for all the right reasons. She cared deeply about justice, civil rights, human equality, and improving the lives of all people. She was a strong advocate for improving educational opportunities and was a member of the Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee. She was courageous and made our world a better place. She will be deeply missed.

Addressing Violence in Our Community

We were all shocked and deeply saddened by the stabbing death of a Parkdale High School student as he walked home from school in April. This senseless act reinforces the need for our whole community to look after the children in our neighborhoods. First, let me say how proud I am of our District I police for their quick work arresting two suspects – the first within an hour of the assault, and the second several days later. Press reports suggest a gang element in this attack. For the last year, I have advocated for an enhanced police gang unit. In a meeting with Chief Melvin High recently, I received assurances that the gang unit will see significant increases, and I will hold the Chief accountable to this promise.

Second, I continue to advocate that the solution to youth and gang violence is a long-term effort to help stabilize families and ensure that all our children have the mentoring and attention that leads them toward self-confidence, respect, and strong values. That is why I fought hard last year to establish “character education” in all the County’s schools, and why it is important that we support Boys and Girls Clubs and other non-profit youth programs. I introduced a resolution to establish a task force to evaluate what the county and non-profits are doing programmatically to prevent youth and gang violence. This task force will recommend appropriate changes and offer assessments to ensure a well-coordinated and systematic violence-prevention effort in the County. The police, County government, our schools and non-profits can do a great deal, however, it will take our families and an overall community effort to address the root causes of youth and gang violence by supporting all of our neighborhood children.

Councilman Olson’s Committee Assignments: 2008 Legislative Year

Prince George’s County Council
Transportation, Housing and Environment Committee,
Vice Chair

Planning, Zoning and Economic Development Committee,
Vice Chair

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Transportation Planning Board
Chesapeake Bay Policy Committee
Green Building Task Force

In The News



Council Member Olson makes remarks at the Grand Opening of the New Carrollton Four Points Sheraton. The hotel and restaurant are great places for your visitors, as well as for receptions and conferences. Additional retail and restaurants will be opening at the site soon.

Visit: www.FourPoints.com.
(Photo by: Dave Anderson)

Strong Communities, Neighborhoods Coming Together

New Community Associations Being Explored

One of my goals has been to help empower the neighborhoods of District 3. Over the past year, we have worked with neighborhoods toward this end. Community members and civic leaders have come together in the past year to form active neighborhood associations in Seabrook Acres and Riverdale Heights and Hills. Currently, residents in several other neighborhoods are coming together to establish neighborhood civic associations, including the areas of West Lanham Estates, Seabrook, and the Greenwood Hills/Hynesboro Park area of Lanham. If you live in one of these areas and want contact information for the civic leaders in your area, please contact Wanda Brooks in my office: wjbrooks@co.pg.md.us or 301-952-3060.

Many of the other neighborhoods in District 3 have existing civic associations. If you are looking for contact information for the neighborhood association in your community, you can also contact Wanda Brooks in my office.



In March, Councilman Olson sponsored a workshop for neighborhoods interested in forming civic associations.

Neighborhood Victories

I want to highlight two victories that our communities won in recent months to stop liquor licenses from being granted in areas that could only have contributed to problems. These wins were made possible only through the collective efforts of citizens who came together and organized to defend their neighborhoods’ interests.

The first case was along Lanham-Severn Road, adjacent to the Seabrook Acres Community. An alcohol license was requested for a restaurant that is largely a take-out place. The shopping center where the restaurant is located has had its share of loitering and other quality of life problems, and there had, in the past year, been a homicide just up the road a short distance. In addition, several other alcoholic beverage licenses already exist in the immediate area. The newly formed Seabrook Acres Neighborhood Association was strongly opposed to the granting of the license, and my office worked with them to prepare for the Liquor Board hearing. Close to 20 residents attended the Liquor Board hearing to testify in opposition, and the application was denied.

The second case involved an application for a liquor license in the Kenilworth Avenue corridor in Riverdale Park. This would have allowed a liquor store as well as a restaurant with live entertainment (which could essentially have become a night club). The Town of Riverdale Park and the adjoining civic associations of Templeton



Knolls, East Pines, and Riverdale Heights and Hills, joined together with my office and local clergy to apply pressure on the landlord and the business owner as we prepared to wage a fight at the liquor board hearing. With loitering, criminal activity, quality of life concerns, and several other liquor stores already in the area, the neighborhoods had a good case. Ultimately, in the face of a well-organized community, the business owner agreed to withdraw the application for a liquor license and we had another victory for our neighborhoods.

I cite these recent examples because it was only through the power of many residents coming together to advocate that we were able to stop more saturation of alcohol sales in these particular communities. I should also make it clear that for me – and I believe largely for the neighborhoods – it was not necessarily the sale of alcohol that was so troubling, but rather the fact that in the wrong locations and under the wrong conditions, the sale of alcohol can contribute to real problems. Having a well organized neighborhood can make a real difference for each community’s future!

DISTRICT 3

Planning and Development News

As mentioned in my last newsletter, I have worked hard to encourage our Planning Department as well as developers to launch public planning processes to ensure that the public is involved in guiding development adjacent to our communities. Much has happened over the past few months and below is a brief update of the status of some of these processes. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Dannielle Glaros in my office at 301-952-3060 or dmglaros@co.pg.md.us.



Community residents actively participate in the design concepts for the Kenilworth Avenue Corridor.

Central Kenilworth Avenue Revitalization Study

Over the past few months, Dineene O'Connor, Senior Community Planner and Jan Townsend, consultant, Neighborhood Design Center, have been hosting small focus groups to hone in on specific issues facing this corridor. As part of these focus group meetings, they have had the opportunity to meet with community leaders, apartment property managers, county and town police as well as business owners. On February 16, 2008, a public meeting was held to discuss the information obtained from these small group meetings and to prioritize improvements for the corridor. In late April and early May, there will be additional public meetings to discuss the study and react to sketches of what the area could look like that are being completed by students in the architecture program at the University of Maryland. More details on this study can be found at www.mncppc.org/cpd/CKAR/.

Glenn Dale, Seabrook and Lanham Area Sector Plan & Sectional Map Amendment (SMA)



Starting in early summer, the Planning Department will initiate the planning process for the Glenn Dale, Seabrook, and Lanham Area Sector Plan, which will establish the vision for future development in this area for years to come. This plan will cover the communities of Dresden Green, Glenn Dale, Glenn Estates, Glenwood Park, Lanham, Lincoln Vista, Seabrook, and Woodstream as well as several communities outside District 3. It will cover the Glenn Dale Hospital property and key transportation corridors — Lanham-Severn Road and Annapolis Road between the

Beltway and Enterprise Road. The plan was last updated in November 1993.

As part of the 18-month planning process, planners will host multiple community meetings. If your neighborhood is interested in hearing more about this planning process, please contact Dannielle Glaros in my office, dmglaros@co.pg.md.us or 301-952-3060 and we can set up a meeting with the Planning Department. Rex Hodgson with community planning is the staff planner heading up this effort: Rex.Hodgson@ppd.mncppc.org or (301) 780-2232. I look forward to working with all the neighborhoods covered by this plan to ensure that the plan reflects your vision.



New Carrollton Metro Plan

In December 2007, over 100 community members participated in meetings to discuss the vision that should guide development at the New Carrollton Metro Station and the area of Annapolis Road near the



This graphic demonstrates what the Purple Line could look like across the University of Maryland campus.

Purple Line Update

The Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) will be hosting a series of public open houses in May and will be holding a public hearing in September on the preferred route for the Purple Line. If you have not attended a meeting yet, but are interesting in being involved as the final route is selected, please contact Mike Madden, the project manager at (410) 767-3694 or visit the website: www.purplelinemd.com. The Purple Line is a proposed light rail line to connect New Carrollton, the Riverdale area, College Park, the University of Maryland, Silver Spring and Bethesda.

Metro. At those meetings, residents made recommendations on building heights, types of uses, pedestrian connections, green spaces, and other specifics for this area.

In early April, the community met again with the consultant to review the work completed and make additional recommendations. There will be additional public hearings in the months ahead and we will notify residents in the area of those dates. We expect a hearing before the District Council in fall 2008. I look forward to hearing from you on this plan, so please do not hesitate to contact my office as this plan moves forward in the planning process.

Information on the meetings as well as the planning process is available at www.mncppc.org/cpd/NewCarrollton_TDDP_TDOZ/.

US Route 1 Sector Plan Update

The update to the US 1 Sector Plan is scheduled to begin in the fall. More details will be available when the plan is formally initiated. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact Dannielle Glaros at 301-952-3060 or dmglaros@co.pg.md.us.

Addressing Illegal Sign Blight

Like many residents, I am frustrated by the large numbers of illegal signs on our County's roadsides. You know the ones – "We Buy Houses," "Single?," etc. In political season, I know that even some politicians put their signs out in the public right-of-way. But the roadsides (and telephone poles, light poles, etc.) are public spaces, not a space for advertisements that create visual blight.

One of the things that I am working on jointly with Council Member Tom Dernoga and the County's Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPW&T) is how to more effectively deal with this problem. We have several approaches, and DPW&T does send their crews out to pick up these signs from the roadsides



Councilman Olson and Dresden Green President Eugene Young remove an illegal sign.

(and issues fines when the violators can be found). But one of the problems has been that the violators are indiscriminate about where they place their signs. DPW&T can only pick up the signs and levy fines on County roads but the violators place the signs on both County and State roads. At this point, the County's DPW&T is not authorized to address the signs on State roads, and it can be difficult to get the State Highway Administration out in a timely manner to clean up their roadways of

signs. Therefore, we worked with Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk to craft state legislation to allow the County's DPW&T to pick up the signs from state roads and issue fines there as well. Unfortunately, that legislation did not pass this year.

When these signs are in the public right-of-way, it makes our community look bad, and like litter, it is bad for our environment. We can all take these signs down when they are in the public right-of-way, and I encourage each community to help eradicate these signs. The sooner the signs come down, the less likely the violators will be to put them back up over time.

I am exploring other possible avenues to tackle the illegal roadside sign problem, including additional legislation to regulate them.



Working with Police for a Stronger Community

Our County Police are working hard every day to make Prince George's County an even stronger, safer place to live, work, and raise a family. I am working to get them the tools they need to do the best work possible, including increasing their staffing. But part of their success depends on each of us keeping an eye out in our communities and letting the police know about suspicious behavior or criminal activity.

We have had a number of arrests lately that are making for a stronger, better community due to active citizen involvement and reporting of problems to the County Police.

I do not want to get too specific about locations or about the particular civic groups involved, but can say that in recent months we have had arrests of several drug dealers who were causing serious problems in one of our neighborhoods – police found tens of thousands of dollars of drugs during their arrest. In that particular neighborhood, children had been at risk due to the nature of the drug activity. In another area of District 3, overlapping several neighborhoods, County Police were aided by active citizens who were sick of the vandalism and graffiti that was plaguing their communities.

Several individuals were arrested.

In order to tackle the crimes and quality of life problems in our neighborhoods, we each need to be aware of what is occurring around us. Our work as residents and our vigilance looking out for our neighborhood is often critical to helping police catch criminals and solve crimes. We each are the eyes and ears in our neighborhoods and we can help police by letting them know if there is illegal or suspicious activity occurring. Thank you to the active neighborhoods that contributed toward these recent arrests.

For emergencies, call 911; for non-emergencies, call County Police at 301-333-4000.



ERIC'S LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

Last year, the County Council passed my legislation that prohibits any new pawn shops from opening in the County as well as several other bills that I introduced. This year I am working to introduce a number of bills, several that I have outlined below:

Alternative Energy Tax Credit. This would provide a tax credit of up to \$5,000 for homeowners who install solar or geothermal energy sources. In this era of high energy demand, the possibility of energy blackouts, and serious concern about climate change, the more that we can do to make alternative energy more affordable will help all of us.

Green Building. I have been working on legislation to encourage new county and commercial construction to include more energy efficient features to reduce carbon emissions and water consumption.

Making Prince George's a "Cool County." This resolution is intended to help our County Government reduce our energy use through conservation, by using more energy efficient practices, and by ensuring that future County buildings will be "green." This will both reduce our contribution to global warming and save money.

Historic Properties. In some of our older communities, some of our historic homes could be at risk of being lost. These are houses that add character to our neighborhoods, and the process of an owner adding them to a historic property register is often lengthy. I am seeking legislation to allow for a quicker, easier process for people to add their homes to the historic property list. This does not mandate that properties be added to the historic list, rather it would allow a property owner to add their home if they qualify and desire it to be added, making it eligible for rehabilitation tax credits.

Farmers Markets. At the request of the Riverdale Park Farmers Market, I am introducing legislation to allow vendors to purchase a short-term permit to sell food (14 – 60 days per year) at Farmers Markets. Unlike other jurisdictions, Prince George's only allows vendors to purchase permits on an annual basis, which is cost-prohibitive for some food vendors. This will help with our efforts to make our Farmers Markets even more dynamic and vibrant.

Strip Clubs. Too often strip clubs are able to gain a foothold in our neighborhoods by disguising themselves as another use such as a dance hall or theater. I'm working to draft legislation to tighten the county's definitions to ensure that no neighborhood in the future finds a strip club opening up next door.

Youth and Gang Violence Prevention Task Force. See Page 2 for more details.

County Budget

Over April and May, the County Council will be holding public hearings on the WSSC budget, Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission budget, the Board of Education budget, and the County budget. Determining the County budget for the next fiscal year, which starts July 1, 2008, will not be easy. The need for services — road improvements, police staffing, education, social services — continues to grow and yet, due to the economy, fewer revenues will be available in this year and probably next year to completely meet those needs.

The downturn in the housing market as well as the increase in foreclosures is negatively affecting revenue and State aid to the County has decreased by \$53.3 million for this coming fiscal year.

I encourage you to be involved as the budget process moves forward and let my staff or I know if you have any concerns. I also want to alert you to two public hearings scheduled in May. On **May 7 and May 13, 2008** there will be, respectively, Public Hearings on the County budget and the Board of Education budget at 7pm in the County Council Hearing Room in Upper Marlboro. The County budget by law needs to be completed by the end of May. For additional information, call Clerk of the Council's Office at (301) 952-3600.



**Eric Olson
Council Member
District 3**

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A group photo of six young people, three boys and three girls, standing together. They are wearing dark, long-sleeved shirts with a white peace symbol on the chest. One boy in the center is wearing glasses. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. The background is dark and indistinct.

**Supporting our Youth and the Arts
June Jam Black Music Festival
Saturday, June 21st—Six Flags America
Prince George's County Arts Council and
The Colours Program**

Mark your calendars! And, join me for a great event featuring the youth of this county and District 3. Colours, an ensemble performing arts program, which promotes positive social change and leadership through the arts, will be hosting a 6-hour youth music and arts extravaganza on June 21st at Six Flags America. All of the groups have not yet been announced, but several wonderful programs in our schools will be featured including Lyrical Storm, a poetry slam group at Parkdale High School and the new Positive Vibration Steel Drum band at Paint Branch Elementary School. Performances are from 4 p.m. - 10 p.m. Tickets to the Park & Concert can be found for close to 50% off the regular price at www.colours.org (\$22 for a day pass and \$54.99 for a season pass).

The Colours Performing Arts Program is also offering a summer program, based at Northwestern High School, for kids ages 7 and above. No tryouts required. More details are available at www.colours.org.