



CROFTON CIVIC ASSOCIATION
BOARD and GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING
Library Media Center, Crofton Elementary School
January 13, 2025 – 7:00 PM

Present:

Board Members: Anna O’Kelly (remote), Stephen Tull, James Kitchin, Daria DeLizio, Charles See, Rob Kendall, and Hal Sheldon.

Staff: Martin H. Simon, Jim Harvey, Jason Jett, Tara Gottschalck.

Vice President Stephen Tull opened the meeting with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements:

Town Hall will be closed on January 20th for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day.

The next CCA Board meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 3rd at 7:00 PM, at the Library Media Center at Crofton Elementary School.

The Crofton Winter Farmers’ Market continues through April 26th on certain Saturdays from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM at the Crofton Library. The market features local and regional foods, crafts, and artwork. See Croftonfarmersmarket.com for details. The market will be open next on January 18th, February 1st and 15th.

There will be a fundraiser at Nando’s Peri Peri on January 14th from 4:00 PM to 8:00 PM for Eagle Scout candidate Sam VanGordon from Troop 115 for the refurbishing of three benches at Swann Park. Use code NANDOS2025.

The Crofton Middle School band and strings will be performing holiday favorites on Wednesday, January 15th, starting at 7:00 PM at the Crofton High School auditorium.

On Thursday January 23rd from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at Southern High School, there will be a District 7 Budget Town Hall with County Executive Steuart Pittman and County Councilwoman Shannon Leadbetter. Attendees are asked to pre-register online at acounty.org.

The Crofton Salutes Our Heroes program has returned and is open now through April 11th. Banners honoring veterans and currently serving members of the U.S. Army, U.S. Navy, U.S. Marine Corps, U.S. Space Force, and the U.S. Coast Guard will line Crofton Parkway and will be installed prior to the Armed Forces/First Responders Parade on May 10th. Banners are \$250.00, with an option to provide a biography of your hero on our website.

The 3rd annual Cherry Blossom Festival is scheduled for March 22nd with a March 29th Rain Date. The festival runs from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM and is located on Crofton Parkway’s inner loop between the two entrances for Eton Way. The event includes live music, food trucks, and booths and activities from many local organizations. Additional organizations are welcome. Please contact Jim Harvey at Comptroller@CroftonTownHall.org if interested.

Crofton Library Events highlights: (see full schedule at aacpl.net)

January 14, 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM, Preschool Hangout, Ages 0-5

January 16, 4:15 PM to 5:15 PM, Book Buddies: Last Comics on Earth Series, Ages 6-10

January 17, 3:00 PM – 4:00 PM, Nature Detectives Winter Animals, ages 6 and up

January 22, 6:00 – 7:00 PM, Bingo Night, Ages 6 and up and adults

January 25, 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM, Lunar New Year Celebration, all ages

January 28, 4:30 PM to 5:30 PM, Reading Rebels Classics Teens ages 11 and up

January 27, 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM, Crofton House Plant Club

Board of Directors Vacancy

In accordance with the By-laws, when there is a vacancy in a District Directorship, the Board shall elect a person who resides in or owns property within that District. This District 3 vacancy has one candidate who resides within District 3, Charles R. Cook. James Kitchen motioned to elect Charles Cook as District 3 Director. Hal seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Charles will serve at least until the end of the current term in 2026.

Guest Speaker

Stephen introduced James Jones, Anne Arundel County Community Engagement Officer.

James encouraged residents to attend the upcoming Budget Town Hall meetings hosted by County Executive Steuart Pittman. The next meeting is scheduled for January 23rd at Southern High School.

He spoke about the speed reduction to 30 MPH on Riedel Road and mentioned the speed cameras soon to be installed there.

James encouraged residents to send comments and questions to the Engage Arundel website.

FY2026 Budget Presentation

Stephen introduced James Kitchin, CCA Board Treasurer, to present the FY2026 SCBD and CCA budgets.

James reported the budgets were distributed to residents by hard copy mail in the December *Advocate*.

James thanked Town Hall staff for their assistance with the budget. He highlighted the following:

The fiscal year for the SCBD runs from July 30th to June 1st.

The SCBD budget is separate from the CCA budget.

Expenses were increased 2.86%, which is within what the Board of Directors is allowed to approve on its own. CCA By-laws state that the Board can approve a budget within plus or minus 4% of the previous year. Anything beyond this range would require a community vote with a 75-person quorum.

The tax rate was increased from 0.1% to 0.1023%.

Included is a 3% COLA and a 3% merit increase for eligible staff.

The general liability insurance has increased by \$53,000. The increase was offset by factors such as the police officers not needing health insurance, the police department not needing updated equipment this year, and reserve funds.

The tax district has \$1,300,000 in revenue. \$78,200 was withheld by the county due to tax assessments and will be credited for next fiscal year. Additional revenue comes from interest earned on our accounts. Last year almost \$37,000 was earned. For FY2026 \$21,000 was budgeted since interest rates are going down. The remainder of reserve funds are also included.

The projected Tax district expenses total \$1,368,000 and \$800 appropriated from reserves. The commercial loan for the front entrance property has \$236,000 remaining annually over the next eleven years.

The reserve funds are savings for future expenses for things such as replacing park equipment, and police vehicles and equipment. We have increased our insurance deductible expenses this year. Funds are in reserve if we end up paying a higher deductible.

James explained the \$419,000 revolving fund that supplements income from July 1st through December 30th when there is no income from the county. This fund allows us to cover expenses and payroll until we receive funds from the county in December.

James presented the CCA Budget which is not funded by tax dollars. It is funded by donations, advertising, and grant programs. It is the CCA Budget which supports covenant enforcement. The \$9,000 in this budget is mostly from advertisements in the *Advocate* and *E-Advocate*. The CCA receives a \$2,400.00 grant annually from the Arts Council of Anne Arundel County. This grant supports the Summer Concert Series. This year the Banners for Heroes program returns and will add revenue.

With regards to revenue, James pointed out that since the association took in over \$50,000 for the Crofton 60th Anniversary programs, the By-laws dictate that an audit is required if revenues are over \$50,000. Additionally, the revenue from the anniversary program required the filing of special federal tax forms, which was an added service that was hired out to complete. James reported on the association assets which include recreation escrow, covenant enforcement, and the \$100,000 the county paid the civic association for the forest easement at the front entrance. It is currently deposited in a short-term CD. The civic association has approximately \$3,500,000 in fixed assets which include Town Hall and all community properties and parks.

James mentioned that as per the By-laws the line-item budget published in the *Advocate* was sent to all residents of the tax district by hard copy mail in December. The *Advocate* is also published on our website.

A resident asked about the justification of the insurance increase of \$53,000. Jim Harvey responded that the increase was due to police workman's compensation claims, public officials and police liability policies, and some legal issues from last year. That coupled with the usual increase caused a significant rise in rates.

Approval of Minutes –

The previously distributed minutes of the last Board meetings of November 18th and December 9th 2024 require approval. There were no additional revisions needed. The minutes were filed.

Town Manager's Report – *Martin H. Simon*

Martin reported that DPW will hold a meeting on January 30th at the Crofton Library from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM. They will announce the plans for the Crofton Meadows water treatment expansion plan (phase II). The plant will increase its water capacity from 15,000,000 gallons to 20,000,000 gallons per day. There will be county vehicles parked along Riedel Road. There will be temporary sound barriers installed to minimize noise. This project will last for one year.

Martin expanded on the Budget Town Hall for District 7. He and Anna spoke last year on the installation of a pedestrian sidewalk from Staples Corner to Bell Branch Park. There is money in the current budget. James expanded saying this project is listed in the appendix for this fund. This does not guarantee that the project will be a priority. Advocacy is needed to move this project forward. Martin is asking residents to attend the Budget Town Hall meeting and voice your desire to have this project move forward. It can benefit the community by reducing vehicle traffic, especially during sports season when this stretch of Davidsonville Road has significant traffic delays.

A resident asked about co-funding between the county and the state, given this stretch of property covers both. James Kitchin responded that both agencies can match the state funding with county funds to complete the projects. James added this project is also included in the county's Walk-n-Roll Master Plan. He also encouraged attending and advocating at the next County Budget Town Hall meeting on January 30th, at Arundel High School.

Martin asked the Board for their interest in pursuing an Anne Arundel County Watershed grant program. He believes it could financially assist with the rain garden at the front entrance. All three CCA rain gardens in the community require improvements. There is a zoom meeting scheduled for January 28th that he will attend. There are \$15,000 to \$300,000 grants available dependent upon the project. The Board agreed that Martin should investigate the program.

Martin provided an update on the County Council's public hearing on January 21st. Councilwoman Rodvien proposed a bill #100-24 which financially impacts all special community benefit districts. Currently, the CSCBD pays a fee of \$2,000 to the county for handling the collection of our money. This bill states they will charge 5% of revenues, which would equal \$69,000, however, there is a cap of \$10,000 (a 500% increase for the tax district). Martin spoke to Councilwoman Rodvien who agreed to pull the bill for now to give tax districts time to respond. Martin will put together a memo to summarize our concerns. Jim is putting together a database of special tax districts in Maryland. Auditors who do this work are becoming scarce.

Martin provided the monthly police overtime report. There were 24 $\frac{3}{4}$ overtime hours worked. There were 17 hours used in additional patrols at Crofton Centre over the holidays. There were 4 hours used to escort the AVFD Santa on his tour around town on December 16th. There were 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ hours used for officers on late service calls.

Due to the snow event on Monday, Martin authorized administrative leave of 18 hours for Tara and Jim. Martin was able to staff Town Hall since he walks to work. Martin authorized the police to take home their vehicles to facilitate their safe commute on Monday morning.

Comptroller's Report – James Harvey

Jim circulated his financial report on first and second quarters to Board members.

Jim reported that the \$100,000 from the county forest conservation easement has been deposited to Shore United in a 90-day CD yielding a 3.75% interest rate.

Jim reported the Constant Contact subscription contract has gone over the allotted use for community emails, mostly due to the Crofton 60th Anniversary programs, and estimates we will spend an additional \$300 through the end of FY25. We will now be limiting community emails by publishing information to our website, social media pages, and the E-Advocate.

Due to the high increase in insurance rates, Jim has been investigating insurance coverage. Most companies will not cover police departments. He is looking into the Maryland Municipal League, who requires membership to obtain rates. Initially the membership cost was \$3,000.00, however there is a special rate of \$500.00 for special tax districts. He will join and investigate their rates.

Jim reported that the bond policy has been renewed.

The last of 60th anniversary tree ornaments have been sold.

Jim found four potential auditors for special tax districts. One charges \$10,000 more than the current auditor. He found an auditor available who formerly performed our audits in the 1970's.

The E-Advocate was sent out last week. All advertisers have renewed.

The Heroes banner program has three participants so far. He expects at least ten. All banners will be installed along Crofton Parkway before the Armed Forces Parade on May 10th. All banners must be installed in one batch because they require a bucket truck. Bartlett Tree Service has agreed to do the installations.

Jim reported the Cherry Blossom festival has seven or eight organizations participating. There is room for two more. Crofton Kiwanis is now having an artist and crafters section.

Police Chief's Report – Chief Jason Jett

Chief Jett reported he will be investigating ways to increase productivity and meet the needs of the community now that the department is at full staff.

The Chief mentioned the upcoming cold weather, and reminded residents to take precautions with power outages, hazardous roadways, and iced over bodies of waters, especially the pond on the golf course. He encouraged folks to check on neighbors.

The Chief reported on 2024 statistics. There were significant increases due to increased staff. There were 688 traffic stops in 2023 and 1,040 traffic stops in 2024. Calls for service increased from 5,222 to 6,008. Patrol checks have increased from 2,141 to 3,185. Police department statistics are posted to the website and are published monthly in the E-Advocate.

The Chief announced that Tim Utzig has been promoted to Corporal. Cpl. Utzig brings over thirty years of experience from Baltimore and Anne Arundel Counties to the Crofton Police Department.

The Chief reported that Cpl. Gable has been assisting Anne Arundel County Police with DUI instruction at the academy.

The Chief provided an update on the License Plate Readers (LPR). He is waiting on the county police to provide information and the new vendor. There are no updates yet. Funds have been set aside for this. In the interim, county police have offered access to the fixed LPR's in the area.

The Chief reported that new handguns and optics training was completed in December. Chief Jett is now a certified instructor and will be able to qualify our officers at future trainings.

The Chief reported that all 2024 MPCTC training has been completed. He is in the process of scheduling training for 2025.

Chief Jett reported on the police department's participation in community events. The department participated in the Annual Holiday Tree Lighting at the Crofton Country Club, and escorted Santa and the fire department around town on their tour December 16th.

The Chief reported Sgt. Sims partnered with Vuong's Martial Arts in a women's safety event. The event was free to the public and well attended. Sgt. Sims would like to make this an annual event.

The department participated in a bicycle handout at Raising Canes for the Boys and Girls Club of Annapolis.

The department escorted the Ghosts of Christmas Crofton around the community while they sang and performed Christmas Carols.

A resident asked Chief Jett about the No Parking signs along Crofton Parkway. She is concerned that the trailer and camper parking creates a safety concern for snowplows and emergency vehicles. The Chief agreed that it does. He explained that the new signage will open the original section but continue the Tuesday and Thursday restrictions. He commented that at least there is a tree screen in that location. He hopes it will create enough of an inconvenience because they must be moved periodically. In addition, new signage will prevent

parking along the parkway to Crawford Boulevard in hopes of clearing out the jet skis parked there. The signs are expected soon from DPW.

Committee Reports

Recreation Committee – *Daria DeLizio*

Daria had nothing to report.

Greater Crofton Council Liaison – *Chuck See*

Chuck reported the November 12th GCC meeting on the Route 3 presentation by SHA was postponed until February 2025. The date has not been decided yet.

Planning and Zoning – *Chuck Cook*

Stephen gave Chuck a pass since he just started.

Covenant Review Committee – *Stephen Tull*

Stephen reported there were no submissions for the month of December. One submission was received today.

Maintenance and Operations – *Rob Kendall*

Rob had nothing to report.

Education Committee – *Hal Sheldon*

Hal reported on local school events.

All Anne Arundel County Schools dismiss two hours early on January 16th and 17th. All schools are closed January 20th and 21st for Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, and End of Semester Day.

January 14th is Ledo Pizza Spirit Night fundraiser for Crofton Elementary.

January 31, the PTA night, and Maryland Black Bears game. Puck drop at 7:30 PM.

January 15th is the Spring Choral Concert at 6:00 PM.

Public Safety Committee – *Brian Riley*

Brian was not present and did not provide a report.

With no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned for an Executive Session to discuss legal matters.

Meeting minutes completed by Tara Gottschalck, Administrative Assistant (January 31, 2025)

MS/JH/JJ(tg)