

Takoma Park Community Meeting with State Legislators
Review of Legislative Plans for Upcoming 90 day Maryland Session

Sunday, January 11, 2009

Delegates Sheila Hixson and Heather Mizeur and Senator Jamie Raskin

Notes recorded by JoAnn Bowman

Sheila Hixson: is Chair of the Ways and Means Committee.

- Transport: good chance of subsidies for the purple line – one of 1st and probably most important transportation activities to take on
- Paper Ballot/2010 – and will audit votes this session
- Slots: defended her position in supporting slots for education funding. We won't see money from slots for 2 years. Any earnings are dedicated to education, to replace the so-called "Thornton formula".

Heather Mizeur: Is a Health Policy Specialist on the Health and Government Operations Committee.

Efforts underway, but facing a gigantic deficit (1.9 b) – 415m has to be cut/addressed this year

- Kids First – find uninsured kids who need assistance (there are around 100,000)
- Young Adults – keep on parental insurance plans to age 25

New bills to introduce:

- Maryland Cares: cover eligibility and regulatory efficiency standards, and require providers to use an 85% threshold of the premium to be spent on the individual people, not administration.
- Foster Care System: Working on leveraging resources from the Fed – kids 18-21 years old
- Prosthetic Parity: working to lower costs and limits on replacement limbs
- Good government and Transparency – require more transparency about government business conducted in committee, where deals are struck before they go to the floor
- Just Cause Eviction
- FMLA: Clarify who in State can qualify – which employees, more extended family members
- Paid Sick Day Requirements: add
- Earned Income Tax Credit: there is a lot of unused assistance – help get this information out to people who surely need it.

- Protecting Tuition Costs
- Oppose ICC – put towards other transit needs
- Montgomery College

Jamie Raskin – on Judicial Committee, chaired the Montgomery Co for Obama campaign, delivering the highest % in the area.

Bills he plans to introduce:

- Jane Lawton Farm to School Initiative: purchase healthy food from MD farms for schools
- Create a MD Food Statewide Council – deal with hunger and health
- Create Commission on the Death Penalty. The death penalty has proved to be no deterrent to crime in those states where it is legal. Repeal the death penalty.
- Stop Md State Policy for Policy to “Spy” - no spying or surveillance on local public hearings and do-good groups like those at TP Presbyterian Church, Farmers Market, Catholic nuns/Mennonites, some who have ended up on “terrorists” lists because of their beliefs!
- Homestead Tax Credit – Peace Corps people lose their credit when overseas, while others who serve the government overseas get it – should equalize and extend it to PC.
- Lilly Leadbetter/Legislation on Pay Discrimination based on Gender: change law from 180 days from the first event that occurred (even though you didn’t know about it) to 180 days to file a claim/suit from the first date you became AWARE of a disparity/discrimination.
- Brothels/Drug-running to Prostitutes – put in bill against this.
- Employee Misclassification – Bill requiring employers to use correct classifications on independent contractors with full employment rights and benefits, or be subject to civil and criminal penalties.
- Permanent Absentee Ballot for the disabled
- Election Audit
- Fight for 17 year olds to vote in the Primary if they will by 18 by the time of the Election. Lower voter registration to age 16.
- Bill to restrict Montgomery Co residents to sell things on the highway – it’s unsafe.
- Allow grad students/adjunct professors at UMD to do collective bargaining and have a right to be represented.

- Get MD on list with 37 other states which allow you to have wine shipped to your house – we lose tax revenue by not allowing these shipments.

Implores us all to lobby federal congress for the stimulus package – we need it for our state programs.

Question and Answer Period

1. Q. Department of Transportation – how do we get it to do something? We asked them about N. Hampshire Ave business plans, and traffic signals, but DOT always says it can't do it for various reasons. A. Legislators told them to notify all of them; between them and their various relationships with advisors, there's a better chance to get things done.
2. Q. Inheritance Tax – States that if one is married, the other is exempted from inheritance tax upon death; but not for "same sex" partner. Want reciprocity for sr citizens, partners, domestic partners. A. Legislators will check reciprocity and retroactivity.
3. Q. Union Baker Closed: lost jobs – public employees on Mont Co Gov treating citizens badly/arrogantly in the 2002 deal.
4. Q. Regulated utilities – our utilities make a profit and aren't required to coordinate services. There is no coordination oversight. We need buried electrical lines and to start in small steps street by street each year – will save costs in the long run from less tree/electrical damage. WSSC: needs oversight – it's dysfunctional. Carroll Avenue is taking way too long; they're leaving holes where you can damage your car, etc. A. Legislators thought it was a good idea to require more coordination between public utility services, check in with the City, etc. For people who want to complain to WSSC, Randy Winston, 301.206.7339) is in charge of the Carroll Road project.
5. Q. Could you fight to allow \$ to go towards in-state rates for college tuition for immigrant children? Now it is out of state rate, too high. A. This gets held up in the Senate, but we'll push for it.
6. Q. Property taxes – you don't get property tax rebates in Montgomery County until you're 70 years old. And Property taxes are going way up; but our house values are going way down. Since we have to pay extra taxes in Takoma Park, less people are buying here. FYI – you can appeal your taxes every year for 3 years. A. Legislators were aware of the facts.
7. Q. I'm on Housing Indicator Committee of Montgomery housing partners (NGO). Works on affordability through HUD.
8. Q. Drug offenders and petty crime victims are over incarcerated in the US/MD. L. Yes, will work on a criminal law revision.

9. Q. Joanne Wu, a naturopathic physician, asks if the City has considered having the Seventh Day hospital for a naturopathic clinic – a sustainable community clinic. A. Thought this was a good idea.
10. Q. Support birth options alliance in TP: we need to address the sorry state of birth rights/choices in MD. We already lost our midwives clinic because of excessive State Paperwork.
11. Q. Jan 26 – Working on Environmental Agenda. Want to defend ICC - \$4B put aside with \$3B yet to spend has much better uses. And it counts as debt against general debt.
12. Q. Storm water Sligo Creek. Friends of Sligo Creek ask for more storm water and pollution control. And pass the “Bottle Bill”! A. Legislators thought it might go through this time.
13. Q. Education: we need to assure we keep what we have in our current education budget, and they need to compensate for the past budget mistake they made last year. O’Malley wouldn’t meet with our country PTA Vice President, turned her down. There are 1500 new kids this year not accounted for in the budget; we CAN’T lose any of our budget. A. Our main hope is to hold the line on our budget, not CUT.
14. Q. I work for Montgomery Co conservation Corps. We need to assure that ICC will get funded out of the stimulus. And, we should try to set up a conservation corps in the State to help use stimulus funds. A. Interesting Idea

Mayor Comments

- City has employed lobbyists for things at the State level; have much better ones now. Let City know of issues they should be used for.
- WSSC Concerns. City has communicated a lot with WSSC. City has complained that they have some bad WSSC subcontractors, and WSSC says it has no way to terminate contractors. City is working on a revised process to give input to WSSC on subcontractor performance in the city – will be a much better step to managing performance.
- Need legislation to put a wine & liquor store in Takoma Park; request just came in.
- Eviction Bill – this is a City Priority.
- Discovery is moving its headquarters to NYC.
- Purple Line is Montgomery County’s first priority: it will be light rail.

Mike Tabor of Voice: Congratulated our guys in Annapolis, saying they’re great. Everyone gave a good applause of appreciation.