

Dear Neighbors:

The month of March is the official start of the budget season - when the council and county executive agree to a spending plan for the upcoming year - and this one is unlike *any* in recent memory. County Executive Baker is proposing a plan for FY 2016 that combines furlough days and layoffs for county employees. Mr. Baker's revenue plan proposes historic tax and fee increases - some for the first time in decades - [primarily to fund a 21-percent jump in school funding](#).

The specific goal announced by Mr. Baker and Superintendent Kevin Maxwell is to move the Prince George's County Public School system from its next-to-last academic standing to the top ten among Maryland's 24 jurisdictions by the year 2020. [Dr. Maxwell will present a detailed plan](#) to the council on March 17, when it is anticipated he will provide an explanation about how the improvement plan will impact *specific* neighborhood schools.

Spending Cuts

Reduction in Force of 110 filled county positions

No funding for 240 already vacant positions

Five furlough days for all county employees, no exception for public safety

Tax and fee Increases

The proposed tax increases include:

Real property tax increase of 15.6 percent for residential and commercial (.15 cent increase from .96 1.11 per \$100 of assessed value)

Personal property tax increase of 16 percent (.38 jump from \$2.40 to \$2.78 per \$100 of assessed value)

Telecommunications tax increase of 4 percent

Hotel tax increase from 5 percent to 7 percent

Increases in building, licensing, and related permitting and technology fees

School System Investment -- \$208,462,857 million additional county contribution over three years*

The almost \$133 million for FY 2016 represents an increase in the County's contribution over FY 2015 of 21.1%.

Year One (FY 16)

\$39.7 million more for school based funding including expanded foreign language and art, literacy and TAG programs

\$20.7 million for retention pay for teachers

\$6.1 for iPad program for targeted 3rd, 5th and 8th graders

\$3 million for college and career academies at all high schools plus dual enrollment for high school students at more area colleges

\$2 million to expand universal pre-K to 16 more schools over three years

\$3.1 million to extend Healthy Start Breakfast to 11,000 more students

\$1.1 million for 20 more school-based parent advocates

**FY 17 increase would be \$50 million and FY 18 increase \$25.5 million*

There are some key elements of this budget proposal I will consider supporting; however, I will ask [a](#)

[of hard questions](#); however, I am very concerned about the impact of the proposed property tax increase on low-income families, seniors and others on fixed incomes, and small businesses. And while I am generally in favor of the school investment plan, I have concerns about the top-heavy nature of PGCP's and will ask about a possible reduction in central office staff. Many of these employees are the highest paid personnel in the school system, yet they have little or no impact on student achievement.

I also want to see more emphasis on neighborhood schools - many of which have been left behind because of the emphasis on non-boundary lottery and specialty programs. We should look at housing those programs in community schools that serve students within a geographic boundary instead of centralizing them. The current configuration makes our per-pupil transportation cost one of the highest in the state. I know this will not be an easy discussion, but it is one we must have.

Special Budget Town Hall

So that my constituents and I can better understand the proposed package - especially the tax increases and school improvement plan - my office is in the process of organizing a special District 1 Town Hall meeting in the next few weeks. I take my fiduciary responsibilities seriously, and I value the input and feedback from residents that will help me make some difficult decisions in the coming months. Watch this space for details on the upcoming budget town hall and feel free to call or email my office with questions between now and then.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours in Service,

Mary Lehman

County Council District 1

[Public Hearings on the County Budget](#)

All meetings will be held in the Council Hearing Room, County Administration Building, First Floor, 14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive, Upper Marlboro, MD

Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission

Tuesday, April 14, 2:30 PM

Community Development Block Grant

Tuesday, April 14, 7 PM

Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission

Monday, April 27, 7 PM

County Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program

(Includes Prince George's County Public Schools)

Tuesday, April 28 & Monday, May 4, 7 PM

[Watch this web page](#) for budget updates.

Upcoming Events



Zoning Rewrite Meeting & District 1 Civic Leaders Breakfast

This Saturday! Saturday, March 21, 9:30 AM- 11:30 PM

Beltsville Library

4319 Sellman Rd., Beltsville MD 20705

Join us for our regular gathering of District 1 civic leaders and an important presentation by M-NCPPC staff on the zoning rewrite. [Click for flier.](#)

After approximately ten months of outreach and research, the M-NCPPC consultant team released the Evaluation and Recommendations Report for the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations Rewrite. This document reflects the consultant's conclusions for how the Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations should be restructured. Attend and share your thoughts and ideas on what the Prince George's County's 21st Century Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Regulations should emphasize. [Read the Evaluation and Recommendations Report here.](#)

District 1 Bilingual Code Enforcement Education Session

How to be a Good Neighbor

Wednesday, March 25, 6-8 PM

Cherokee Lane Elementary School

9000 25th Ave., Adelphi, MD 20783

Join us to learn about the different rules, regulation and permitting requirements in Prince George's County. [Click for flier.](#)



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