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COUNTY COUNCIL OF TALBOT COUNTY, MARYLAND

COUNCIL MEETING

May 7, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

Easton Elementary School, Easton, Maryland

COUNCIL MEMBERS:

Chuck Callahan, President

Dave Stepp

Keasha Haythe

Pete Leshner

Lynn Mielke

REPORTED BY: David Corbin, RPR

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 2</p> <p>1 TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS</p> <p>2 MR. CALLAHAN: Okay. Let's go ahead and</p> <p>3 get started. I want to welcome everybody to</p> <p>4 tonight's budget hearing and we're going to go</p> <p>5 ahead and get started. Thanks a lot for</p> <p>6 coming. So Mr. Leshner, go ahead and reopen</p> <p>7 the -- the meeting.</p> <p>8 MR. LESHER: Thank you, Mr. Callahan. And</p> <p>9 we'll start by simply asking Mrs. Moran to read</p> <p>10 the title of the bill number 1553 into the</p> <p>11 record.</p> <p>12 SECRETARY: Bill number 1553, an Act to</p> <p>13 establish the 2024/2025 annual budget</p> <p>14 appropriation ordinance.</p> <p>15 MR. LESHER: And, Mr. Stamp, would you</p> <p>16 like to queue this up for us and introduce what</p> <p>17 we have in the budget before us.</p> <p>18 MR. STAMP: Yes. Good evening, County</p> <p>19 Council, and everybody joining us this evening.</p> <p>20 I want to just take a moment, Council, to say a</p> <p>21 couple things relative to the proposed FY25</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 4</p> <p>1 just talk a little bit about our budget</p> <p>2 strategy that we used this year and have done</p> <p>3 successfully in the past. We use a</p> <p>4 conservative budgeting strategy where we try to</p> <p>5 overestimate expenditures and underestimate</p> <p>6 revenues. That served us well in the past. We</p> <p>7 continue to do that in drafting this FY 25</p> <p>8 budget. We also maintain a healthy fund</p> <p>9 balance which is a savings account. This is</p> <p>10 very important in the times that we find</p> <p>11 ourselves in with the economic uncertainties</p> <p>12 that we have seen and we need to be prepared</p> <p>13 for the unknown. So we have maintained a</p> <p>14 healthy fund balance. And it's important to</p> <p>15 note that Talbot County maintains the lowest</p> <p>16 property tax and the second lowest income tax</p> <p>17 in the State of Maryland of any county of the</p> <p>18 23 counties and Baltimore City. That's a very</p> <p>19 powerful statement and it is something that</p> <p>20 we're very proud of. I would also like to say</p> <p>21 this budget clearly prioritizes public safety</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 3</p> <p>1 budget. First is just to shape the discussion</p> <p>2 in that Council every year works beginning in</p> <p>3 November to December to carve out a strategic</p> <p>4 plan with staff, to identify clear goals and</p> <p>5 objectives to set forth for the next year. And</p> <p>6 then in January through April Council works</p> <p>7 together with the County Manager's department</p> <p>8 heads and heads of agencies and organizations</p> <p>9 to craft a proposed budget, which we have</p> <p>10 before you this evening. I would like to take</p> <p>11 the opportunity to sincerely thank the Council</p> <p>12 for their support and I would like to recognize</p> <p>13 Martha Sparks, our finance director, Kaitlyn</p> <p>14 Foster-Clark, the assistant finance manager,</p> <p>15 Jessica Morris, assistant county manager, and</p> <p>16 all those department heads and many heads of</p> <p>17 agencies and organizations who work together</p> <p>18 with us understanding that we can't give</p> <p>19 everybody everything they want but we try to do</p> <p>20 our best to give everyone enough to accomplish</p> <p>21 their mission. Additionally I would like to</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 5</p> <p>1 and education. Not saying that it doesn't</p> <p>2 support all the other general areas of</p> <p>3 Government and supports the organizations, but</p> <p>4 again it does prioritize public safety and</p> <p>5 education. We use an overarching strategy when</p> <p>6 we move forward through the year, we call it</p> <p>7 our three P strategy, that's personnel,</p> <p>8 processes and projects. Under personnel we</p> <p>9 find ourselves right now in a very competitive</p> <p>10 work environment where retention of our</p> <p>11 employees and recruitment of new talent is</p> <p>12 extremely important. And we recognize it's our</p> <p>13 employees that drive the successes that we</p> <p>14 enjoy every day in our service to the</p> <p>15 community. And then under processes, we</p> <p>16 continue to evaluate our County Government to</p> <p>17 find those processes that could benefit by</p> <p>18 leveraging technology to improve it. And so</p> <p>19 this is our second component of our strategy.</p> <p>20 And finally, we have been engaging in a number</p> <p>21 of significant infrastructure projects which</p> |

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1 I'll talk about in just a minute. Next year
 2 we're going to be pursuing the completion of
 3 our public safety building, the north emergency
 4 medical services station, which puts a new
 5 paramedic crew in the north end of the County,
 6 extension of sewer to rescue failing septic
 7 systems and to clean up tributaries, and then
 8 expand the library at St. Michaels, and as well
 9 the expansion of Chapel school. Finally I just
 10 want to talk a little bit about our current FY
 11 24 budget. I'm pleased to say if we took a
 12 snapshot of where we are today, we're meeting
 13 our goals and objectives and we are on target
 14 to end the year within the projected budget,
 15 which is significant. I would also like to say
 16 that we have accomplished a number of pretty
 17 important things. A component of our airport
 18 modernization project is under way and there
 19 have been some completion out there. We
 20 completed the gymnasium and the pickleball
 21 courts in our community center. We will be

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1 coming to final completion of the new Talbot
 2 County Health Department and achievement park
 3 in Easton at the end of June of this year.
 4 That's exciting. We have been able to make
 5 capital improvements in our region two
 6 wastewater treatment plant in St. Michael's.
 7 And, again, extending sewer out to Royal Oak
 8 and we will continue that project. We have
 9 completed infrastructure enhancements to the
 10 Department of Corrections and our courthouse,
 11 and we have made major road repairs and
 12 resurfacing efforts -- completed resurfacing
 13 efforts across our 370 miles of roadway, just
 14 another project. So staff is very proud of the
 15 work that's been done and we will continue to
 16 move forward. At this point I will turn it
 17 over to our Finance Director, Martha Sparks.
 18 Martha.
 19 MARTHA SPARKS: Good evening everyone.
 20 What you have before you for FY 25 is a
 21 balanced general fund budget of \$163,970,000

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1 for the 2025 fiscal year. This budget
 2 continues the county's conservative budgeting
 3 methodology. These budget practices have
 4 served the County well and have placed us in a
 5 healthy financial position. Some highlights of
 6 the fiscal year 2025 budget include revenues
 7 that are two percent over FY 24 property tax
 8 revenues in accordance with our charter. We
 9 also added one cent to the property tax rate
 10 that was authorized by the voters of Talbot
 11 County in November 2020 to support and enhance
 12 public safety expenditures. A four-point -- a
 13 four cent education supplement to support
 14 Talbot County public schools budget
 15 initiatives. The funding to Talbot County
 16 schools of 54.6 million is an increase of
 17 3.65 million from their FY 24 funding and is
 18 2.8 million above the local share funding,
 19 which is required by the State. Capital
 20 improvement project funding, also identified as
 21 CIP funding, for Talbot County public schools

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1 includes 16.9 million for a capital project
 2 request for Chapel District elementary school
 3 renovation, and 1.5 million in additional CIP
 4 funding that Council has appropriated for TCPS
 5 to determine the priority of its use against
 6 their CIP requests. For County operations,
 7 this budget has included a three percent cost
 8 of living adjustment and one step for County
 9 employees. In this budget the County has
 10 continued its investment in public safety by
 11 adding four public safety communication
 12 specialists, also known as 911 operators, and
 13 an addition of one student resource officer
 14 supervisor. The County has also increased its
 15 appropriation to outside agencies by
 16 1.2 million. Fund balance reserves will be
 17 used to make a significant investment in County
 18 infrastructure. Capital improvements in the FY
 19 25 budget in the amount of 27.5 million. Fund
 20 balance reserves will also be used to invest in
 21 2.98 million of the purchase of the -- for the

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1 purchase of vehicles and equipment recognized
 2 in this budget as capital outlay. In our FY 25
 3 budget we project a 12.3 increase in property
 4 tax revenues, a 19 percent increase in income
 5 tax revenues that reflect a slight modification
 6 to budgeting our income tax revenues. In order
 7 to align them with a level that have been
 8 realized over the last five years. These
 9 revenues are historically volatile for the
 10 County and must be carefully projected and
 11 monitored. These increases combined with
 12 projected increases of other local taxes,
 13 governmental revenues, and the nonrecurring
 14 transfers of impact fees from the development
 15 impact fund, along with the nonrecurring
 16 transfers of fund balance reserves, will bring
 17 us to an overall increase in revenues of
 18 27.26 percent. Talbot County receives most of
 19 its revenues from property and income taxes.
 20 Together they make up 81.1 percent of the
 21 County's operating revenues and 61.5 percent of

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1 the total FY 25 budgeted revenues. Recordation
 2 and transfer taxes are the next largest group
 3 of County revenues, contributing approximately
 4 8.6 percent of the County's operating revenues.
 5 In FY 21 and FY 22 Talbot County experienced
 6 its highest levels of recordation and transfer
 7 tax revenues. In FY 23 and FY 24 these
 8 revenues moved to more normal levels and our FY
 9 25 budget projections are aligned with those
 10 levels. These revenues are highly -- heavily
 11 tied to the activity in the real estate market
 12 in Talbot County. The County has historically
 13 made very conservative projections of its
 14 revenues. Due to the volatility of its income,
 15 recordation and transfer tax revenues, this
 16 strategy of underbudgeting our revenues has
 17 enabled us to build healthy reserves. In this
 18 budget cycle we have modified our approach by
 19 more accurately projecting revenues to be in
 20 alignment with revenues the County has received
 21 over the last five years. This realignment

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1 shifts us away from building reserves and
 2 shifts us to supporting our general fund
 3 operating expenditures. In November 2020 the
 4 voters in Talbot County supported an amendment
 5 to our charter that enabled one cent to be
 6 added to our property tax rate for the support
 7 of the County's expenditures related to public
 8 safety. This began in FY 22 and will end with
 9 the FY 26 budget. Council has an opportunity
 10 to create a ballot initiative to be included on
 11 the ballot in November 2024 if it chooses to
 12 ask the citizens to vote to continue this
 13 valuable support to the County's public safety,
 14 which includes the Sheriff's office, Detention
 15 Center, Department of Emergency Services, and
 16 our volunteer fire departments. The County has
 17 used the revenues from the one cent for
 18 enhancing public safety for 26 positions,
 19 including additional deputies, school resource
 20 officers for our schools, paramedics, EMT's and
 21 911 operators. Also a career ladder for the

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1 Department of Emergency Services, and also the
 2 inclusion of the Sheriff's office, paramedics
 3 and EMT's into the Leox retirement program, and
 4 the Department of Corrections officers
 5 inclusion into the Cores retirement program.
 6 Leox and Cores are enhanced retirement programs
 7 through the Maryland State Retirement and
 8 Pension System for public safety employees. As
 9 you can see in the slide, each year the County
 10 has used more than the revenues generated from
 11 that one cent to enhance public safety
 12 personnel serving the citizens and visitors to
 13 Talbot County.
 14 Our proposed property tax rate of .7910
 15 for County-owned properties was calculated
 16 using property tax revenues two percent over FY
 17 24 revenues in accordance with our charter and
 18 with the prior revenue levels that were
 19 certified by the State Department of
 20 Assessments and Taxation. An additional one
 21 cent to support public safety and a four cent

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1 educational supplement to support Talbot County
 2 public schools budget initiatives. Our overall
 3 property tax rate will increase 4.76 cents over
 4 FY 24, which amounts to a 6.4 percent increase.
 5 The County tax bill for a home with a property
 6 assessment of 300,000 will increase from
 7 \$2,230.20 to \$2,373, which is a 142.80 cent
 8 increase, \$120 of which is attributable to the
 9 education supplement. And we have provided
 10 here a sample of what the homeowners tax bill
 11 would look like. And here in this slide you
 12 can see the property tax rates of Baltimore
 13 City and the 23 counties in Maryland. This
 14 information comes from the Maryland State
 15 Department of Assessments and Taxation website.
 16 As you can see, Talbot County has the lowest
 17 property tax rate in Maryland. And since I
 18 made this presentation of the budget at the
 19 introduction, I've updated the schedule too.
 20 In reviewing Montgomery County's property tax
 21 rates, and a schedule found on their website, I

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1 observed that they have several components of
 2 their property tax that were not included in
 3 the overall property tax rate that was reported
 4 to SDAT. These components are comparable to
 5 our public safety one cent and educational
 6 supplement, and I revised the schedule to
 7 reflect that. This correction places Talbot
 8 County at the lowest property tax rate in the
 9 state. And this is one of the few times you'll
 10 hear me say I'm glad we're in last place. In
 11 comparison to other counties, Talbot County has
 12 the second lowest income tax rate in 2024.
 13 Fitch Ratings best describes Talbot County's
 14 income tax revenues when it says income taxes
 15 are a higher percentage of revenues. That is
 16 true for most Maryland counties. That is
 17 partially due to the very low tax environment
 18 compared with the rest of the state which
 19 provides incentive for a small number of high
 20 income earners with second homes to declare
 21 their income in the county. This is why Talbot

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1 County's income tax revenues are so volatile
 2 and difficult to predict, and that's due to the
 3 small percentage of high wage earners that
 4 claim Talbot County as their home. Our FY 25
 5 budget represents an increase in projections
 6 for income tax revenues at 37 million, which is
 7 in alignment with levels we received in the
 8 last five years.
 9 Overall education expenditures for Talbot
 10 County represent 37.7 percent of its total
 11 budget. This includes expenses for Talbot
 12 County public schools, Chesapeake College, and
 13 the Talbot County Free Library. Talbot County
 14 public schools alone represents 43.4 percent of
 15 the County's operating expenditures. The
 16 Maryland Blueprint required local share funding
 17 was increased by \$810,000 in FY 25. In
 18 addition to the mandated funding, the County
 19 has included an additional appropriation of
 20 \$2.8 million. Funding to support Talbot County
 21 public schools increased overall by

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1 3.65 million above FY 24 levels. By moving the
 2 increase in school funding to the educational
 3 supplement, the County is providing a more
 4 structurally balanced budget. Included in the
 5 CIP budget is 16.9 million in the capital
 6 project request for Chapel District elementary
 7 school renovations. An additional fund -- and
 8 additional funding of \$1.5 million for other
 9 capital improvement projects to be prioritized
 10 by Talbot County public schools. And while not
 11 a part of the appropriations to the schools,
 12 the County further supports the safety at
 13 Talbot County public schools by including an
 14 additional position for a school resource
 15 officer supervisor in this budget. This will
 16 enable our Talbot County Sheriff's office to
 17 ensure that each school always has proper
 18 coverage and an SRO on site during school
 19 hours. Public safety accounts for 22.7 percent
 20 of the total budget with general government at
 21 10.7 percent. There are 2.9 million in capital

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 18</p> <p>1 outlay expenditures included in this budget. 2 These nonrecurring expenditures and the level 3 of funding required for these type of 4 expenditures can fluctuate based upon equipment 5 and vehicles needed as well as funding 6 availability. The FY 25 budget also includes 7 an investment in County infrastructure of 8 27.5 million to be paid for with fund balance 9 reserves. Personnel actions that were taken in 10 this budget include three percent cost of 11 living adjustment and one step for employees, 12 also five new public safety positions and other 13 benefit actions for public safety were taken. 14 These will provide recruitment and retention 15 opportunities for our public safety 16 departments. 17 Total fund balance and Rainy Day funds 18 reserve. The fund balance at the end of 19 June 30th, 2023 was 90.7 million, which grew 20 22.4 million from the end of FY 22. At the end 21 of FY 23 the Talbot County -- Talbot County had</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 20</p> <p>1 manageable long term capital plan and a very 2 strong reserve position." Fitch's assessment 3 of the County's financial resilience is as 4 being "in the highest category is based on the 5 combined strength of its fund balance position, 6 its ample expenditure flexibility, and its 7 strong ability to adjust revenues through 8 policy action to counterbalance its 9 historically volatile revenues. The County 10 typically increases its property tax levy by 11 the full amount allowed annually under the 12 County charter. Both the property and income 13 tax remain the lowest in the state." And I 14 would like to close with thanking Council. 15 This really is a team effort. And we could not 16 present this budget to you as the Finance 17 Director and Assistant Finance Director and 18 County Manager without the support of Council. 19 We couldn't do what we do without cooperation 20 and really great collaboration with our 21 department heads and also I must thank my most</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 19</p> <p>1 15.9 million designated as Rainy Day reserves. 2 These reserves give the County less exposure to 3 the risk associated with revenue and 4 expenditure volatility, particularly in times 5 of inflation or recession. We are still 6 experiencing elevated levels of inflation and 7 those increases are also included in this 8 budget. This strong fund balance is a result 9 of the County's conservative budgeting methods, 10 and those conservative budgeting methods were 11 the guidance for staff in the formation of the 12 budget that you have before you. And I would 13 like to close with the County's report card, 14 independent report card let's call that. Here 15 in September of 2022 we were rated by Moody's 16 Investor Service and Fitch Rating as a part of 17 our process to go out for a bond issuance. 18 Moody's said "financially the County is very 19 strong and the management team is generally 20 conservative in its budgeting. Our credit 21 strengths are low, long term liabilities with a</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 21</p> <p>1 excellent finance department. 2 MR. STAMP: That completes the 3 presentation from the staff for the proposed FY 4 25 budget. Thank you. 5 MR. CALLAHAN: Thank you. Great job. 6 MR. LESHER: Thank you, Mr. Stamp, 7 Ms. Parks for the presentation. The -- unless 8 we have any questions from Council, we can open 9 the public hearing for -- on Bill Number 1553 10 to comments from the general public. We ask 11 that you please come forward to the microphone, 12 that you state your name and address for the 13 record. You'll be given three minutes to speak 14 if you are representing yourself, five minutes 15 if you are the one who is representing a group 16 or association. We did provide a list to sign 17 up to speak in advance and we will call those 18 people who signed up first in the order that 19 they signed up. If you have not -- if you have 20 not signed up, you will still have that 21 opportunity to speak but only after those who</p> |

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| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 22</p> <p>1 have signed up in advance. We will start with 2 first on the list which is Christina Drostin. 3 And queued up behind her will be Elizabeth 4 Walters. 5 CHRSTINA DROSTIN: My name is Christina 6 Drostin. My address is 34 Londonderry Drive in 7 Easton. County Council members, I appreciate 8 the opportunity to speak tonight, I appreciate 9 the background and the broad overview as well 10 as all the detailed information of clearly hard 11 work you've done in creating this budget. I am 12 here first and foremost as a parent of a child 13 who attends Talbot County schools. I 14 appreciate that the County Council has seen it 15 fit to fully fund the Blueprint programming as 16 required by the State of Maryland. I would 17 like to take a few minutes to talk about the 18 remaining significant gap between what TCPS has 19 requested and what the County Council has 20 committed to fund. I also speak as a local 21 family doctor who deeply cares about this</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 24</p> <p>1 language learning are adequately staffed. With 2 respect and gratitude, I appreciate your work 3 with leading our County. 4 MR. LESHHER: Thank you. Elizabeth Walters 5 is next, followed by Hazel Walters. 6 ELIZABETH WALTERS: I meant to get that in 7 different order but that's okay. Good evening. 8 My name is Elizabeth Walters. My address is 9 11568 Old Cordova Road, Cordova, Maryland. I'm 10 a CDES parent. I'm also a representative for 11 Chapel to the Superintendent, and I sit as an 12 at-large member on the Citizens Advisory 13 Committee to the Board of Education here. I 14 want to say first and foremost I fully support 15 the full budget. I also fully support the work 16 that you've done here, appreciate everything 17 that you're saying, all the details. Can't 18 wait to go home and tell my husband about the 19 dang impact fees he asks me about every day 20 that I don't know anything about because I 21 don't sit on these committees. But here's what</p> |
| <p style="text-align: right;">Page 23</p> <p>1 community. Over the years I've been involved 2 on projects to recruit more primary care 3 physicians here to the Eastern Shore. Many of 4 the potential doctors who are considering 5 moving here consider where to raise a new 6 family or where to start a family. One of the 7 key considerations that I hear over and over is 8 how well our schools are performing as well as 9 how well is the local government funding and 10 supporting those schools with what it needs. 11 Speaking as a parent and a community member, I 12 recognize the high number of students who 13 require special education services and also 14 those who are English language learners here in 15 Talbot County. These students need and deserve 16 specially trained staff who can meet their 17 needs. I'm concerned that with the still 18 remaining gap between what TCPS has requested 19 and what the County has committed to fund, I 20 would like to ask that we ensure that the 21 positions for special education and English</p> | <p style="text-align: right;">Page 25</p> <p>1 I want to put forth for 2026. Ready. We're 2 not even talking about spending. This is 3 the -- we're talking about '26. When I Google 4 the best district school in Maryland in 2026, I 5 want to see Talbot County. I appreciate last 6 place. I don't want to be last place in the 7 school system. Howard County is beating us. I 8 don't like that. When I Google the best 9 employer in this County, I don't think Wynn and 10 Company should come to the top. I think it 11 should be Talbot County public schools. And I 12 think the number next year when Doctor Pepukayi 13 and the Board of Ed who give as much cautious 14 conservatism to the budget that they presented 15 to you guys, because I sit in some of those 16 committees that talks about that, and we nickel 17 and dime and penny pinch and get creative and 18 look for free things. I don't want to do free 19 things any more. I want to buy all of it 20 because of all these young faces. These young 21 faces are the people that Christine needs to</p> |

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1 recruit to be a doctor. When we talk about
 2 growing our own, I want the doctors to come
 3 from these girls right here. That's where
 4 they're going to come from. The number you
 5 need to add to her information next year is
 6 \$11 million. Whatever she comes to you with,
 7 you just add \$11 million. That closes the gap
 8 between us and Howard County and what they
 9 spend per pupil. And we may not come in last
 10 any more on the income tax and property tax,
 11 but I'm okay with that if it means we get to
 12 come in first in employer and first on
 13 district. If I have a couple more seconds, I
 14 want to point out that the number one school in
 15 the United States of America funds their
 16 teachers at \$138,000 a year. Our starting
 17 salary is 52. I think we can do a little
 18 better. And our \$300,000 house, the \$52,000
 19 employee can't buy that. So let's do a little
 20 better in 2026. Peace be with you for this
 21 year. Thank you very much.

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1 MR. LESHHER: We have two mics here so
 2 we can get the next person queued up behind
 3 them. Hazel Walters is here and followed by
 4 Megan Berman.
 5 HAZEL WALTERS: Good evening, County
 6 Council members. My name is Hazel Walters and
 7 I'm a student at Chapel District. Thank you
 8 for letting me speak tonight. Chapel has
 9 amazing clubs that kids use to start the
 10 project of who they want to be and I'm proud of
 11 that. My present teacher, Ms. Shaw is so nice
 12 but she needs enough money to do what she needs
 13 to do. My first grade teacher was amazing
 14 because she had the power to make kids learn.
 15 My kindergarten teacher was amazing because she
 16 is kind, sweet and knowing to be. And a long,
 17 long time ago in Pre-K I learned that Chapel is
 18 an excellent place to live. And I want all of
 19 TCPS to have the same experience. What I'm
 20 trying to say is Chapel is amazing and I want
 21 it to stay that way. Thank you for your time

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1 tonight. I love speaking.
 2 MR. LESHHER: Thank you. We have Megan
 3 Berman followed by April Motovidliak.
 4 MEGAN BERMAN: My name is Megan Berman.
 5 My address is 26334 Arcadia Shores. And I'm
 6 going to read right from my phone because I'm
 7 really nervous. I live in Easton, I'm a
 8 graduate of Easton high, and I have two
 9 children that attend St. Michaels elementary.
 10 But tonight I'm speaking from my role as a
 11 reading tutor at SMES. Year to year my job
 12 depends on funding from the County, like so
 13 many other positions. Maryland Senate Bill 734
 14 mandates that students are screened and tested
 15 and those with reading difficulties receive
 16 interventions. We screen all students in K
 17 through three with a test called Dibbles three
 18 times a year. Based on Dibbles we decide if
 19 students in grades one through three meet tier
 20 one or tier three intervention. Sorry, tier
 21 two or tier three. Tier two students receive

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1 in-class, small group instruction while tier
 2 three are pulled by reading tutors for small
 3 group instruction. There are 153 students in
 4 grades one through three enrolled at SMES. The
 5 number of students currently receiving tier two
 6 interventions in grades one through three is
 7 52. The number of students currently receiving
 8 tier three is 42. That means that 61 percent
 9 of our students from grades one through three
 10 are receiving reading intervention. I asked
 11 our reading coach what the impact on her job
 12 would be without tutors, and she said "honestly
 13 I don't know what we would do without tutors."
 14 We aim to have students in small group
 15 interventions three times a week for 30
 16 minutes. Ideally a small group should be four
 17 students or less. Without tutors, my job would
 18 completely change. I wouldn't be able to
 19 co-plan with teachers, progress monitor
 20 students, track data, assess students, et
 21 cetera. I would become an interventionist

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1 versus a reading specialist. Having tutors
 2 allows my role to be much more focused on the
 3 whole school. Without tutors I would be seeing
 4 students constantly. I see the progress
 5 students make in small groups. I bond with
 6 them, I root for them, and I celebrate with
 7 them when they succeed. With such a focus on
 8 testing and scores and students falling behind,
 9 schools depend on being well-funded to provide
 10 services for students to succeed. I hope you
 11 consider fulfilling the request of TCPS for the
 12 sake of our students. Thank you.

13 MR. LESHER: Thank you. April Motovidliak
 14 followed by Kim Gibbons Neff.

15 APRIL MOTOVIDLIAK: Good evening. My name
 16 is April Motovidliak, a graduate of Talbot
 17 County public schools. Presently I serve my
 18 community as an acute care nurse practitioner
 19 for hematology and oncology. Likewise I have
 20 recently served four years on the Talbot County
 21 School Board, therefore I personally know what

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1 it is to be awarded funding for a large
 2 project, projects such as before you. I think
 3 it's safe to say that most of you know who I
 4 am, but something you may not know is that I
 5 once was a lost teen-ager without direction.
 6 The initial goal of my freshman year was where
 7 is the party. Consequently I received two
 8 alcohol citations within the first month of
 9 school. I was headed down the wrong road
 10 rapidly. Fortunately my guidance counselor at
 11 that time, Debbie McLean, who also happened to
 12 be the field hockey coach who later recruited
 13 me to her hockey team. Playing field hockey
 14 led to basketball followed by softball,
 15 ultimately turned me into a three sport athlete
 16 now with a new focus on school, studies and my
 17 attendance, because you had to make the grade
 18 and attendance to play the game. Next fast
 19 forward to 2024. I'm a busy parent of two
 20 student athletes. My oldest played field
 21 hockey in high school and at Goucher College

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1 and primed her for a premed major at Salisbury.
 2 My youngest daughter is a junior who opted to
 3 transfer from our local St. Michaels high
 4 school to Easton high school last year enabling
 5 her to play both field hockey and lacrosse.
 6 Current research has shown how supports
 7 positively influences students academic
 8 performance and overall education. Athletes
 9 learn to develop routines to accommodate their
 10 sporting commitments which translate into
 11 disciplined study habits. Having the ability
 12 to juggle multiple responsibilities effectively
 13 is a vital skill that contributes to academic
 14 success and later in professional life.
 15 Similarly time management skills fostered
 16 through sports enables students to utilize
 17 their time more efficiently leading to improved
 18 academic performance. In addition, sports
 19 plays a significant role in mental health and
 20 well-being which is closely linked to effective
 21 learning and academic performance. This

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1 activity increases blood flow to the brain,
 2 improving concentration, memory and classroom
 3 behavior. Also teamwork and social skills
 4 developed in sports directly apply to group
 5 projects and collaborative tasks in academic
 6 settings. Students who participate in sports
 7 learn how to work effectively as part of a
 8 team. Participation in sports plays a crucial
 9 role in cultivating leadership skills among
 10 students which can greatly benefit their
 11 academic and future professional life. These
 12 leadership experiences in sports help student
 13 development, confidence, initiative, and the
 14 ability to influence and guide others. Now who
 15 would have thought the skills and attributes
 16 developed on the playing fields can be a
 17 valuable asset in the classroom, helping
 18 students achieve academic excellence and
 19 preparing them for future challenges and higher
 20 education and beyond. Today a
 21 once-in-a-lifetime opportunity has occurred.

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1 The Make A Wish Foundation has so graciously
 2 granted Elgin's selfless wish, a potential turf
 3 field, keeping in mind she could have wished
 4 for a multitude of other things which would not
 5 have benefited this county or its students.
 6 This deal, this gift, could be the gift that
 7 will keep on giving by engaging and ultimately
 8 saving young lives in the community just like
 9 mine was several years ago. I would also like
 10 to point out that Queen Anne County has four
 11 turf fields as well as many of our surrounding
 12 counties. And I would also like to request
 13 that funds be specifically earmarked for the
 14 turf field as opposed to lumping it in with
 15 capital projects and allowing the school board
 16 to pay. Thank you.
 17 MR. LESHHER: Thank you. Following Kim
 18 Gibbons Neff we have Lesli Creedon.
 19 KIM GIBBONS NEFF: Hello. My name is Kim
 20 Gibbons Neff. I live at 9721 Little Clovelly
 21 Lane in Easton. I have been the Easton high

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1 school field hockey coach for the past two
 2 years. I have been blessed with getting to
 3 know Elgin and her passion for field hockey and
 4 life. Elgin has been an inspiration to me and
 5 her teammates. Her wish for a turf field for
 6 the Easton high school complex is one of the
 7 most selfless acts I've witnessed. Elgin wants
 8 to leave a legacy for her fellow athletes and
 9 I'm here to give her 100 percent of my support.
 10 I honestly don't understand why we have to
 11 fight so hard and for so long to bring a turf
 12 field to Talbot County. Not only will it
 13 benefit the entire community, the schools, the
 14 restaurants, the hotels, the shops for allowing
 15 tournaments to happen, practices from other
 16 teams, et cetera, but it will allow our
 17 athletes to compete with the surrounding
 18 counties who have already put turf fields in
 19 their schools and communities. I have watched
 20 my girls play teams with turf fields and we're
 21 always a half step behind. We have the

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1 skillset but the speed of the game can not be
 2 mimicked in practice when you're playing on
 3 grass. We have upgraded to Bermuda grass
 4 fields, which is much better than when I
 5 played, however the fields are not maintained
 6 properly. Our grass gets cut once, maybe twice
 7 a week when the guy who cuts it tells me that
 8 it should be getting cut every other day. In
 9 the budget it's not allowed, he can't come.
 10 There are bumps, holes, and uneven areas that
 11 cause athletes to trip, turn their ankles, and
 12 allow the ball to fly up, which can be very
 13 dangerous in field hockey. I've seen a lot of
 14 goose eggs because of the ball being out of
 15 control from hitting a divot. A turf field is
 16 level and provides a much smoother surface to
 17 allow more control of the ball. I have been a
 18 resident of this County my whole life and I
 19 love it. It's a small town living at its
 20 finest. The one thing that I do believe is
 21 missing is supporting our kids. I watch my

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1 girls come to practice after a long day at
 2 school, they put their shin guards on and
 3 cleats on with a smile and they head out to the
 4 field two hours a day, five days a week. They
 5 then go home to complete their homework to get
 6 up and do it again the next day. And most of
 7 my girls have part-time jobs where they go in
 8 the evenings after practice and on the
 9 weekends. They put their time in and have
 10 earned the right for us to support them in
 11 their efforts. I look around this County and I
 12 have seen really great things happening.
 13 There's lots of pickleball courts, there's even
 14 a dog park with artificial turf. Got to admit
 15 that one stung a little bit. These are amazing
 16 additions to our County but they are not geared
 17 towards our youth. We need to show our kids
 18 that they are important to us and that we care
 19 about them. Remember, these kids are the ones
 20 who will be taking care of you and me in the
 21 future. In the end I just want to see a fair

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1 chance for all the kids in Talbot County.
 2 Bringing a turf field into the Easton high
 3 school stadium would build a sense of pride in
 4 our kids. Let's show them that we support them
 5 and Elgin's wish for a turf field. Elgin was
 6 dealt a hand that not many of us will ever have
 7 to deal with. I think the least we can do is
 8 to make her wish come true. Thank you. I
 9 think a few of my girls might have signed up
 10 thinking it was a sign-in sheet and not
 11 speaking. So there might be a couple on there
 12 that might just waive and say...

13 MR. LESHER: They can waive. That's fine.
 14 Following Lesli Creedon, we have Ricky
 15 Vitanovec.

16 LESLI CREEDON: Good evening. I'm Lesli
 17 Creedon. I'm the President and CEO of Make a
 18 Wish for the Mid-Atlantic out of Bethesda,
 19 Maryland. We are the local chapter of the Make
 20 a Wish of America Foundation and we're
 21 responsible for granting wishes to all children

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1 two and a half to 18 years old who have a
 2 qualifying diagnosis in Maryland, the entire
 3 State of Maryland, D.C. and Northern Virginia.
 4 Every year there is about 450 children that
 5 qualify for our programs and every single one
 6 of them gets their wish. Not many of those
 7 children do the selfless thing that Elgin has
 8 done and wish to give her wish to others and to
 9 her community. And I'm here tonight to just
 10 offer my support and encouragement and beg you
 11 to fully fund the appropriation that is needed
 12 to make this wish come true. A lot of people
 13 think that wishes are just a nice thing to do
 14 for children. It's a warm and fuzzy feeling.
 15 But there is ample and growing peer reviewed
 16 medical research on the impact of a wish and
 17 how it improves a child's mental, emotional and
 18 physical well-being. Fewer hospital stays just
 19 being part of the wish process, increased
 20 compliance with their treatment, fewer trips to
 21 the E.R. Seventy-five percent of wish kids

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1 actually go on and live through and beyond
 2 their illness and credit the wish as a turning
 3 point in their medical journeys. We want that
 4 for Elgin. Elgin, excuse me. I think it's
 5 also very important to know that a wish takes
 6 an entire community. We have 350 volunteers
 7 across the state including those who are
 8 working with Elgin and her family, and we also
 9 have two other children currently in Talbot
 10 County who are waiting for their wish to come
 11 true. We have partnered with other city
 12 governments for children who have wished to
 13 have playgrounds in the past. The average cost
 14 of a wish here in Maryland is \$10,000. That
 15 doesn't even include staff time or overhead.
 16 We would love -- we would love to be able to
 17 fully fund this wish ourselves, but obviously
 18 it would come at a cost of the wishes of many,
 19 many, many other children being delayed and
 20 receiving their life changing and life
 21 transforming wish. We would pledge -- I

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1 know -- my understanding is there is a gap of
 2 about \$186,000 right now to fully fund this
 3 appropriation. We could put in 60. I know
 4 it's not very far, but if you could come up
 5 with the rest, we will have some skin in the
 6 game here. We want to be able to tell Elgin's
 7 story for many generation and to inspire other
 8 children. You know, one of the things when I
 9 think about the community impact of a wish, we
 10 talk about mental and emotional well-being and
 11 a community coming together to support a child.
 12 Being here tonight, I also realize that the
 13 impact of a wish here in this room has pulled
 14 these young ladies actively, productively
 15 participating in civil discourse and democracy.
 16 And my gosh, what an example that they are
 17 setting for all of us here tonight. So I hope
 18 you'll take that into account too. And thank
 19 you for your support. We really want to be a
 20 part of this amazing experience for Elgin and
 21 for all of the children here.

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1 MR. LESHER: Thank you. Following Mr.
 2 Vitanovec we have Joanne Folsom.
 3 RICKY VITANOVEC: H there. My name is
 4 Ricky Vitanovec and I am representing Talbot
 5 County public schools. I just wanted to first
 6 of all say thank you for allowing us to have
 7 this public forum. I am the theater teacher at
 8 Easton high school as well as the choral
 9 teacher. And having just finished directing
 10 the musical Footloose and the theme of that
 11 show being a community coming together, it's
 12 amazing seeing all of this come together. So
 13 thank you for having this opportunity for
 14 everyone. I just want to thank you all for the
 15 1.5 million that you've given for the capital
 16 projects. I am here asking for a specific
 17 project very near and dear to my heart, and
 18 that would be the Talbot County auditorium
 19 housed at Easton high school the lighting
 20 system that is there. The lighting system at
 21 Talbot County has not been updated since the

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1 early 90's and it is on its last leg. And it
 2 is in a place where they don't make the parts
 3 to even fix the system that is currently there
 4 any more. And I know a lot of people, and I'm
 5 going to try to make it as simple as I can, but
 6 the way a lighting system works, we have the
 7 lighting fixture, which I will say thank you to
 8 Talbot County for providing lights back in 2005
 9 when there was only six there when I started in
 10 2003. So instruments, fixtures were provided,
 11 but the lights plug in to a plug, or circuit,
 12 and that circuit runs to a dimmer panel. The
 13 dimmer panel is the brains of the system. The
 14 brains almost like a fuse box if you will. The
 15 fuse box, the dimmer panel, then runs to the
 16 lighting board, which is basically the
 17 switches. The dimmer panel right now is
 18 failing and we have band-aided it many, many,
 19 many times. The lighting board right now,
 20 if you will go back in time with me to the
 21 amber colored Packard Bell monitor, that's what

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1 is there right now. But I will also say that
 2 the lights that are in the auditorium, the
 3 system that is there, the way it's connected,
 4 that it's not just the lights for the stage.
 5 Once -- once the dimmer panel goes, the
 6 auditorium is basically useless because there
 7 will not be any lights in there for the house,
 8 for anything, because that's the way it is
 9 situated. So I am asking, we did get a -- we
 10 have asked for an \$800,000 grant for that to be
 11 fully funded, and that estimate was done more
 12 than 18 months ago, so hopefully that will
 13 cover everything that needs to -- that needs to
 14 go in there. Obviously I speak on behalf of
 15 the arts and theater departments. But a lot of
 16 people don't realize how much goes on in the
 17 Talbot County auditorium that just so happens
 18 to be at Easton high school. Some of those
 19 examples. Of course shows, which are near and
 20 dear to my heart, for Easton high school,
 21 Easton middle school. Band and choir concerts

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1 for Easton high school and Easton middle
 2 school. All the elementary programs for Easton
 3 elementary, for Chapel District elementary, as
 4 well as White Marsh, their holiday concerts,
 5 their spring concerts, all of those things.
 6 Community band. My community theater group,
 7 Crashbox, does summer camps there, performances
 8 there. We just had an All-shore band concert
 9 there. We of course have the Waterfowl
 10 Festival that has their world championship duck
 11 calling there. Talbot County public schools
 12 opening day that invites the community and all
 13 of our partners to the auditorium to be part of
 14 that amazing celebration. If you haven't been
 15 there, it is truly, truly uplifting. As well
 16 as Easton high school's graduation. I would --
 17 and as the person that usually is the first on
 18 call when there is a problem, one of the first
 19 phone calls when there is a problem with the
 20 lighting system, I would hate for any of those
 21 programs to have to shut down because of the

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1 lighting system failing. I am trying to
 2 combine all of this stuff into a very short
 3 plea for this to be fully funded. But it is
 4 something that is very, very important, not
 5 only for the students, not only for the
 6 programs that happen on stage, but for every
 7 one of the community members that comes into
 8 that auditorium. I can speak again on
 9 Footloose. We had almost 3,000 people that
 10 came to see the show. And, again, if the
 11 lights had gone up, that would not have
 12 happened and that would not have been provided
 13 to our community. So without much more to say,
 14 again, I want to thank you for all of your
 15 support for the schools, for Talbot County
 16 public schools, as well as the whole
 17 community, because coming together is something
 18 that is very important. And I will ask that
 19 this project is fully funded for myself, for
 20 the community, for the students, for everybody
 21 that uses that space. And if there are any

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1 questions about how it works, I'd be happy to
 2 give you a tour. But if there are any
 3 questions, please feel free to contact me, I'm
 4 happy to talk and walk you through any
 5 questions that you may have. Thank you so
 6 much.
 7 LES LENTZ: A new system uses LED fixtures
 8 instead of incandescence and the system would
 9 be able to pay for itself in about ten to 11
 10 years in electricity savings.
 11 MR. LESHHER: Would you like to introduce
 12 yourself. Please, your name for the record.
 13 LES LENTZ: Leslie Lentz. 29741 Apple
 14 Drive, Cordova, Maryland. I do a lot of AV
 15 work in that same room. Thank you.
 16 MR. LESHHER: Dennis Folsom. Next is Linda
 17 Redmond, followed by Jen Trigo. Neither one of
 18 those. I have Elgin Hawley. And she will be
 19 followed by Jen Hawley.
 20 ELGIN HAWLEY: Good evening, Council. You
 21 all know who I am, but just in case, my name is

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1 Elgin Hawley and you know why I'm here. I'm
 2 here to see the turf field through. Although I
 3 am grateful that we have made it this far, I'm
 4 a bit disappointed and frustrated that it
 5 hasn't been a smoother journey to get to this
 6 point, especially since my partner is Make a
 7 Wish. And this wish benefits so many young
 8 athletes in our community. With that said, I'm
 9 no stranger to adversity and do tend to take
 10 the road less traveled. When I'm alone with my
 11 thoughts I imagine our community coming
 12 together on crisp autumn evenings with the band
 13 blaring their music while cheering on our
 14 football players under the glow of the stadium
 15 lights of our very own turf field. With your
 16 full funding support of the field, we can
 17 create a hub for all athletes and comradery
 18 where all ages train, compete, and form
 19 everlasting memories and love for a sport.
 20 Together we can make this vision a reality. I
 21 am asking you one more time to please support

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1 my wish for a multipurpose turf field at EHS.
 2 Thank you so much for your support and special
 3 thanks to Make A Wish for being involved and
 4 advocating on my behalf. And finally thank you
 5 to my army. Thank you for coming along this
 6 journey with me. I couldn't have done it
 7 without you all. Thank you.
 8 MR. LESHHER: Thank you. After Jen Hawley
 9 we have Ryan Chandler.
 10 JEN HAWLEY: Good evening Council members,
 11 Elgin's Army, and Make A Wish. I am the proud,
 12 proud mom of Elgin. What Elgin didn't say is
 13 this last speech was a challenge for her to
 14 write, as it was for me. Maybe it is because
 15 we feel like everything could be said in
 16 support of the field has already been said.
 17 But it can't hurt to remind you one last time
 18 that we're on the precipice of something really
 19 great here. We are so very close. So close.
 20 From the beginning this Council has seen and
 21 heard from Elgin and her Army. You have heard

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1 directly from Elgin where she described her
 2 aneurysm, her perseverance and her recovery and
 3 her motivation for this wish. You have
 4 directly witnessed her drive and selflessness
 5 to get this field and see it through. Anyone
 6 in her Army can tell you about her compassion
 7 and resolve both on and off the field. From
 8 the beginning this Council has seen and heard
 9 from her parents, her mom making sure you know
 10 all of these things not only about Elgin but
 11 about how a turf field could transform our
 12 community. And you have also heard from her
 13 dad telling you about the impact of Elgin's
 14 injury on her family and those around her,
 15 especially Elgin's Army who you see here
 16 tonight. But perhaps what we lack or have not
 17 really thought about is seeing this journey
 18 through Elgin's eyes. Every day I see this
 19 amazing young woman who is overcoming the odds
 20 through effort, determination and heart. And
 21 all without negativity or regret. Elgin

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1 continues to teach me so much. Most
 2 importantly she has taught me to see beyond my
 3 pain, beyond her pain. She has taught me to
 4 keep going, to fight and never give up. While
 5 I'm sure she gets sad and frustrated because of
 6 her physical limitations, she sure doesn't show
 7 it. She is the first to support someone else
 8 who is struggling and continues to mentor young
 9 ones in becoming field hockey greats. I'm left
 10 wondering if those around her know how much she
 11 has been through and how truly amazing she is.
 12 And then I look around this room and I smile.
 13 So I guess the best I can do to convince you
 14 one last time to fully fund the turf field is
 15 to leave you with two things: This view and
 16 the miracle. This view. Please take it in.
 17 Of the up and coming athletes, the coaches,
 18 Elgin's Army, Make A Wish, and the community
 19 who have come together and all supported us
 20 from the beginning. Take it in, the love in
 21 this room. This is the very best of us coming

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1 together for a cause greater than ourselves.
 2 This is what community looks like. Yes, you
 3 are in the presence of something grand. Please
 4 take it in. And finally, the miracle that is
 5 my daughter Elgin Hawley, this lovely talented
 6 athlete of generous spirit sitting before you
 7 who survived when nobody thought she would, who
 8 has remained true to herself when nobody
 9 thought she could, and whose grit and humility
 10 continues to astound. You are in the presence
 11 of this miracle who puts her life out into the
 12 world so that others can shine. What a gift.
 13 What a gift for all of us to be a part of.
 14 Please honor this gift and make her wish come
 15 true by fully funding the field. Thank you.
 16 MR. LESHER: Thank you. After Ryan
 17 Chandler we have Michael Hawley.
 18 RYAN CHANDLER: My name is Ryan Chandler.
 19 Address is 8289 Gannon Circle here in Easton.
 20 What a tough act to follow I must say to start.
 21 So good afternoon Board Members, academics,

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1 friends and most importantly our miracle. I'm
 2 Ryan Chandler, father of three girls that have
 3 or will graduate from Easton high. I'm a huge
 4 proponent of sport and all it does for its
 5 participants. I'm the husband to the coach
 6 that introduced Elgin to the sport of field
 7 hockey and one simple outlet that morphed into
 8 a passion and formed her into the person she is
 9 today. By now you've heard of E's story and
 10 the miracle that she has experienced to
 11 overcome that awful tragedy. This evening I'm
 12 planning to share a few thoughts that
 13 officially join -- and officially join the
 14 movement imploring you to make the right
 15 decision and grant her wish. I read an article
 16 recently from Psychology Today that discussed
 17 the link of comradery and competitiveness.
 18 There were life changing aspects of sport
 19 mentioned that I feel our school administration
 20 may be looking past based on the state of our
 21 facilities. Examples cited include a sense of

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|---|---|
| <p>1 security and belonging, boosting confidence, 2 promoting cooperation, and enhancing the 3 enjoyment and fun associated with being part of 4 something bigger and more important than one 5 self. While we're lobbying you to enhance our 6 athletic field and level up to our competition, 7 the byproduct will help produce more confident, 8 proud, selfless happier kids. Like E. They 9 will go on to be better humans. Let's turn the 10 page and embrace what athletics can do for our 11 kids and it starts by providing the right tools 12 for them to do the job. The most competitive 13 field hockey teams in Easton's conference have 14 turf fields. The path to the state finals is 15 played on turf. The speed and fundamental 16 skills of the game when played on turf compared 17 to a bumpy grass field I liken to you guys 18 doing your job with an old tower PC paired with 19 a 100-pound monitor connected to the internet 20 via dial-up. Advance to the next level of your 21 career using those tools while your competitors</p> | <p>1 jerseys when they are playing, but not today. 2 She didn't have that jersey on, just her pads. 3 So she was sleeveless, guns on full display. 4 Her pads were all black. She looked like a 5 warrior ready for battle. I sat there in awe. 6 She was diving, charging, yelling, and saving 7 shots left and right. With each dive my awe 8 turned into sheer happiness. Her confidence 9 was overflowing. The commitment and work she 10 had put in was front and center. She had 11 arrived and she was ready to put her stamp on 12 the game. You know the timeline what occurred 13 later that summer. Here we are today. So back 14 to this turf field and the opportunity that you 15 have. To build it in her honor would represent 16 the true love, compassion, growth, confidence, 17 pain, suffering, commitment, comradery, 18 dedication and selflessness she has experienced 19 along her field hockey journey. Through all of 20 the hell she has experienced, providing a field 21 for those to come I imagine will feel like</p> |
| <p>1 are running state of the art Mac books using 2 gigabyte internet connections, can you field 3 your confidence growing, are you ready to 4 conquer the world. A turf field is that 5 Macbook for our kids. Trying to respect our 6 time constraints, I call out -- I cut out a few 7 fun memories but I would like to share my 8 favorite of E's hockey career thus far. It 9 took place at Sussex Academy, a high school in 10 Delaware with multiple turf fields in mid 11 June 2021. The club field hockey coach was 12 hosting a practice in partnership with the 13 University of Connecticut to help expose the 14 players to collegiate coaches. It had been a 15 few months since I saw Elgin play, but given my 16 daughter was part of the club, just in a 17 different age bracket, I always looked for her 18 at these events. It took me a few minutes to 19 find her, odd as that may seem as how many 20 goalies could there be, right. But she had 21 transformed. Goalies typically wear oversized</p> | <p>1 redemption for her. Help her lay down the 2 legacy that was so inexplicably ripped away. 3 Give her that feast. I have never heard E 4 express anger or frustration about this 5 horrendous circumstance. Well, dammit I'm mad 6 for her and I'm frustrated, but I'm just a 7 voice. You are a catalyst, or could be. Help 8 secure E's legacy and be the one to transcend 9 Easton Warrior athletics to the next level in 10 E's name. She deserves it. 11 MR. LESHHER: Thank you. We have 12 Mr. Hawley. He is the last person to have 13 signed up. If there are others who wish to 14 speak, you may come up to the other microphone 15 and be queued up after Mr. Hawley. 16 MICHAEL HAWLEY: Good evening. I'm going 17 to be reading this on behalf of Mayor Cook. 18 She prepared a letter, she couldn't be here, 19 and asked if we could read it. Dear County 20 Council members. During the Easton Town 21 Council meeting on August 21st, 2023 Jennifer</p> |

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1 Hawley spoke regarding her daughter Elgin's
 2 wish for a multipurpose turf field at Easton
 3 high school stadium. Elgin's wish is so close
 4 to becoming a reality. Elgin suffered a brain
 5 aneurysm while on the Easton high school field
 6 hockey field on August 18th, 2021 and knows
 7 firsthand the benefits of having a turf field
 8 for her fellow and future students. Elgin's
 9 Army has been working hard to see her dreams
 10 come true. With this in mind, I'm asking that
 11 you consider support for efforts to secure a
 12 turf field for Easton high school and its
 13 athletes. Please consider funding to make
 14 Elgin's wish a reality in funding for the turf
 15 field in Talbot County school's upcoming
 16 budget. The future of our athletes and their
 17 well-being is not only Elgin's wish but a wish
 18 for our entire community. Thank you for your
 19 consideration. Sincerely, Megan J. Cook. And
 20 I'll just add something from dad here if you
 21 give me a second to change gears. We have

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1 heard about psychology and well-being of people
 2 and the well-being of the girls. And as the
 3 community part of it, I think I told you guys
 4 at the first one, I came in here to the Eastern
 5 Shore out of the military after a 22 year
 6 stint. Been deployed to all sorts of places,
 7 all sorts of things that I came in, did not
 8 want to leave the military, was not comfortable
 9 with it, I wanted to stay forever. And I came
 10 to the Eastern Shore. And I don't know if you
 11 guys know it but you're a hard nut to crack.
 12 But we came in here and the biggest thing that
 13 we had to break down those walls to get the
 14 angry Master Sergeant out of me and get into
 15 the next chapter was this group of people you
 16 see behind me. A great group of people who saw
 17 me through the worst tragedy that my family has
 18 ever gone through. It's these places where
 19 we can gather as a community and they can break
 20 down the walls and I can break down the walls
 21 to accept them and everybody can accept one

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1 another. Having something like this to come to
 2 and be part of has been an honor. It's been a
 3 pleasure. I thank everybody here. I thank
 4 everybody in Elgin's Army that's been all the
 5 way. I thank the Council members. Thank you
 6 for your time. And we really appreciate all of
 7 this. Thank you.
 8 MR. LESHER: Doctor Pepukayi. And I
 9 realize I had broken protocol and I didn't give
 10 you an opportunity to come up first.
 11 SHARON PEPUKAYI: I don't mind being last.
 12 Good evening President Callahan and Council
 13 members, County Manager Clay Stamp, and staff.
 14 My name is Doctor Sharon Pepukayi, proud
 15 superintendent of Talbot County public schools,
 16 alum of TCPS, and a resident of the County.
 17 Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to
 18 speak this evening. As I reminder of what we
 19 have been focusing on this year, I want to
 20 relay our three priorities: Increasing student
 21 proficiency in math, fostering an engaging

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1 environment for both students and staff, and
 2 recruiting and retaining highly qualified and
 3 diverse staff. Furthermore we have woven the
 4 five colors of the Blueprint into our
 5 priorities and they too are in place for
 6 student access. With funding last year we were
 7 able to hire additional social workers, we now
 8 have two career counselors that partner with
 9 the workforce development board. Most recently
 10 they spearheaded two very successful career
 11 fairs that were held at both high schools. A
 12 reading specialist is on board to assist
 13 students not yet proficient in ELA. We have
 14 math coaches to assist teachers with using the
 15 best research-based teaching practices. We are
 16 celebrating two newly nationally board
 17 certified teachers and 38 that are pursuing.
 18 We have an additional multilingual teacher and
 19 multilingual navigator to assist students and
 20 families with what they need for school
 21 success. We received accreditation of White

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1 Marsh elementary school and Easton elementary
 2 school Pre-K programs, and we're still at the
 3 top of the list for having high graduation
 4 rates. Our celebratory list could go on and on
 5 but I know my time is limited. What we're
 6 seeing with the data is for grades three
 7 through five in ELA we decreased by 24 percent
 8 students that are in the lowest performance
 9 level. In grades seven and eight we showed an
 10 average of 32 percent increase scoring
 11 proficient in ELA. For high school, an 8.7
 12 increase in students being proficient. For
 13 math, in grades three through algebra one, the
 14 number of students with disabilities that are
 15 being proficient has increased by 42 percent.
 16 There was a 47 percent increase in the number
 17 of students earning passing scores on AP
 18 mathematic assessments. At the conclusion of
 19 the school year we will have a final report out
 20 of our data points connected to our priorities.
 21 We're making strides with our students thanks

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1 to our dedicated staff. And it is teacher
 2 appreciation week so we want to thank our staff
 3 and teachers that work hard for the success of
 4 our students. You have joined with me, myself,
 5 my board, and we have had a few collaborative
 6 interactions this year. I have invited you to
 7 our learning walks to see firsthand the
 8 wonderful things taking place in our schools
 9 and you've joined me with that. We have
 10 conveyed the story of our work being done and
 11 still need to do during the budgeting process.
 12 And I'm ecstatic that you made education one of
 13 your priorities in your budget strategy. Your
 14 fiscal year 25 budget appropriation includes
 15 2.8 million above what was mandated through the
 16 funding formula and an additional 1.5 million
 17 for capital projects. And I thank you for
 18 that. While I know you are mindful of the
 19 impact on the citizens of Talbot County, and
 20 that's to be commended, I'm asking for an
 21 additional 200,000 which could pay for our

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1 instructional software. All of the data that
 2 we're inputting and monitoring is being done
 3 tediously by one person creating pivot tables
 4 in Excel. Having software that can give us the
 5 data quickly can afford us the opportunity to
 6 validate our practices or change our course of
 7 action more quickly and efficiently. It will
 8 also round the 2.8 million to three, giving
 9 3 million over what was mandated. By aligning
 10 research, practice and progress we can catalyze
 11 tangible improvements in student outcome
 12 ensuring that each student receives the support
 13 they need and deserve to thrive. I look
 14 forward to ending our school year just as
 15 strong as we started by transforming and
 16 performing through leading and learning
 17 together as a district community. I implore
 18 you to continue joining our learning walks,
 19 engaging with us during our joint work
 20 sessions, and inquiring with any questions or
 21 concerns you have along the way. I have no

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1 doubt that our continued partnership will
 2 continue to flourish as we focus on the common
 3 commitment of educating out Talbot County
 4 public school students. And I would be remiss
 5 if I didn't recognize my leadership team who
 6 are here that help me do the work. So if they
 7 could stand in the back. I know they are all
 8 sitting in the back. Or waive. That's the
 9 TCPS leadership team that helped me get the
 10 work done. So thank you for your time.
 11 MR. LESHAR: Doctor Pepukayi, could you
 12 briefly just repeat, the 200,000 --
 13 SHARON PEPUKAYI: Technology software.
 14 MR. LESHAR: Thank you.
 15 SHAUNAH BEULAH: Thank you. My name is
 16 Shaunah Beulah, and sadly I don't live in
 17 Talbot County. I live in Federalsburg in
 18 Caroline County. But I'm the branch manager of
 19 the St. Michaels library of the Talbot County
 20 Free Library system. And I want to take the
 21 opportunity to thank all of you for your

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| <p>1 support, and board members, for the library, 2 particularly our project for expanding and 3 renovating in St. Michaels. Listening to all 4 of the things that the school system, we do 5 support them and partner with them as well 6 through all the things that we have. And one 7 of the things we're proud of is that all of the 8 students in Talbot County schools have a 9 library card, and they are able to certainly 10 use our electronic resources but they can also 11 use that card to check out materials. So we're 12 glad to be able to do that. But I do want to 13 thank all of you again for your support for the 14 library and how much we appreciate that and we 15 look forward to that renovation and having a 16 wonderful new building and area in St. 17 Michaels.</p> <p>18 MARY PELLICANO: Hi, my name is Mary 19 Pellicano. 28789 Outram Street, Easton. I am 20 the treasurer for the Board of Trustees for the 21 library. I too want to thank you for the</p> | <p>1 it's absolutely instrumental for students to 2 have a strong library to be successful, and the 3 transformative aspects we have is fundamental. 4 But in addition to that I think we are one if 5 not the most diverse in terms of the audiences 6 that we serve within our community. We have a 7 large number of individuals that come in a 8 variety of ways to import and relate to the 9 work we're doing. Essentially one of the 10 things that's different is I think people prior 11 to the pandemic saw the library as a repository 12 of books and now they really understand that 13 it's an activity to work around them in a wide 14 variety of ways. We're able to provide 15 resources through multiple intelligence, 16 through multiple languages, through a wide 17 variety of resources, and through the expansion 18 we're going to be able to do that in a much 19 better way. I know it's been a long time, 20 we've delayed it over many years, but through 21 your generosity we're able to leverage this</p> |
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| <p>1 unwavering support of the library system 2 through the years. As our president said this 3 afternoon, that we're coming up on our 100 year 4 anniversary and you guys have been great 5 supporters throughout the whole time, even 6 though you don't really look that old. But 7 thanks for your support. And recognizing that 8 the library is a place for life-long learning 9 and an investment in the library is an 10 investment in the community. And thank you for 11 being responsive to the community in St. 12 Michaels and funding their expansion and we 13 hope to see you there for the groundbreaking in 14 the fall. Thank you.</p> <p>15 ROBERT FORLONEY: My name is Robert 16 Forloney. I live at 101 West Marengo Street in 17 St. Michaels. I'm the vice president of the 18 Board of Trustees for the library. I just want 19 to again thank you all for your support. As a 20 former public high school and middle school 21 teacher and now as a professor I can tell you</p> | <p>1 support from the state, so thank you very much. 2 MARY PELLICANO: I also think you should 3 do that turf field.</p> <p>4 JASMINE HEATH: My name is Jasmine Heath. 5 I live at 29064 Superior Circle. I would like 6 to change -- support of in changing our field 7 to be a turf field. Because I am in the 8 marching band and I play flute. And Elgin is 9 still in the marching band but she plays 10 saxophone. And being in the marching band has 11 been challenging since our field is different 12 from every other field that we have been at. 13 It's a very different feeling of being on 14 bumpy, not great grass that is always unkept. 15 It has held us from practice, performances. It 16 has held us back a lot. There has been 17 injuries because of it. And changing it would 18 benefit not only the sports and everyone else's 19 activity and all that, but it would definitely 20 benefit the marching band. So it would be 21 great to change it. In the beginning --</p> |

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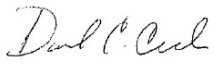
1 BRAXTON CANE: At the beginning of the
 2 year --
 3 MR. LESHHER: Introduce yourself.
 4 BRAXTON CANE: Sorry. I'm Braxton Cane.
 5 I live at 312 Sycamore Avenue here in Easton.
 6 I think -- at the beginning of the -- at the
 7 beginning of the year we weren't able to
 8 practice our field show because they were
 9 taking care of the fields. With a turf field
 10 that would change that so we would be able to
 11 be more prepared for competitions and such.
 12 MR. LESHHER: Thank you. Thank you.
 13 Anybody else. Any other takers. The record on
 14 the budget remains open. Written comments will
 15 be accepted by the County Council until Friday,
 16 May 9th at noon. E-mailed comments can be sent
 17 to publiccomment@TalbotCountyMD.gov. And bill
 18 number 1553, this budget ordinance, is eligible
 19 for a vote on Tuesday, May 28th, 2024. Thank
 20 you all for your input tonight. Thank you all
 21 for your thoughtful input. And even if you

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1 haven't spoken, we have seen your presence.
 2 Thank you all for being here.
 3 (Meeting concluded at 8:20 p.m.)
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1 STATE OF MARYLAND
 2 I, David Corbin, a Notary Public in and
 3 for the State of Maryland, do hereby certify
 4 that the within named, TALBOT COUNTY COUNCIL
 5 MEETING, personally appeared before me at the
 6 time and place herein set according to law, was
 7 interrogated by counsel.
 8
 9 I further certify that the examination was
 10 recorded stenographically by me and then
 11 transcribed from my stenographic notes to the
 12 within printed matter by means of
 13 computer-assisted transcription in a true and
 14 accurate manner.
 15 I further certify that the stipulations
 16 contained herein were entered into by counsel
 17 in my presence.
 18 I further certify that I am not of counsel
 19 to any of the parties, not an employee of
 20 counsel, nor related to any of the parties, nor
 21 in any way interested in the outcome of this
 action.
 AS WITNESS my hand and Notarial Seal this
 13th day of May, 2024, at Centerville, Maryland



 David C. Corbin
 Notary Public

My commission expires November 13, 2027

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