

Prince George's County House Delegation

MINUTES

February 21, 2014

Delegation Room
House Office Building Room 150
Annapolis, MD

Delegates present:

1. Delegate Jolene Ivey, Delegation Chair
2. Delegate Benjamin Barnes
3. Delegate Aisha Braveboy
4. Delegate Dereck E. Davis
5. Delegate Barbara Frush
6. Delegate Tawanna Gaines
7. Delegate Melony G. Griffith
8. Delegate Anne Healey
9. Delegate Marvin Holmes
10. Delegate James Hubbard
11. Delegate Joseline Peña-Melnyk
12. Delegate James Proctor
13. Delegate Michael Summers
14. Delegate Darren Swain
15. Delegate Veronica Turner
16. Delegate Kriselda Valderrama
17. Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith
18. Delegate Michael Vaughn
19. Delegate Jay Walker
20. Delegate Alonzo Washington

Absent:

- Delegate Joseph Vallario
- Delegate Doyle Niemann
- Delegate Carolyn J.B. Howard

Staff:

Daniel Valentine, Legislative Director
Jodie Chilson, Delegation Counsel

Meeting convened approximately 930 am.

I- Subcommittee Reports / Legislation:

1. Bi-County Affairs: Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk, Chair

Public Hearing

- **PGMC 112-14** – MNCPPC - MNCPPC - Regulations to Prohibit Smoking or Use of Electronic Cigarettes (**HB 1334**)

Delegate Kramer and Frush presented PGMC 112 concerning regulations for e-cigarettes at MNCPPC grounds, citing dangers of second hand smoke and wish for rules governing new technology. No other testimony was given.

Delegate Griffith asked if the legislation would lead to a ban on the devices. Kramer said the legislation gives all the leeway to the commission to make the regulatory decision they believe is appropriate.

Griffith said she wanted to be sure that the regulations will not inhibit a person who is trying to quit smoking to use an electronic cigarette device instead.

PGMC 102-14 - WSSC - Commission Infractions - Watershed Regulations (HB 973) (FAV, as amended by Montgomery Delegation)

Delegates present voted unanimously to accept the amendments and favorable recommendation from subcommittee.

2. Law Enforcement & State-Appointed Boards: Delegate Kriselda Valderrama, Chair

PG 303-14 - Raffles - Charitable Foundation Affiliated With Professional Football Team (HB 965) (FWA)

Special Ordered One additional week by request of Delegates Howard and Niemann.

(continued)

PG 310-14– Prince George’s County – State’s Attorney – Salary (HB 976) (FAV)

Subcommittee Chair Valderrama then introduced PG 310, which had been special ordered for two weeks after questions from Delegate Walker and others.

Delegate Braveboy made a motion to vote favorably on the bill, seconded by Delegate Pena-Melnyk.

Delegate Holmes asked about the position of the State’s Attorney on the salary bill.

Delegate Braveboy said she thought that SA Angela Alsobrooks had testified and was in support. Other delegates were unable to recall her speaking.

Chair Ivey asked the County Executive’s representative Courtney Glass and Ms. Nancy Lineman, a Deputy State’s Attorney for the State’s Attorney, to come forward to express positions.

Ms. Lineman introduced herself and stated that State’s Attorney Angela Alsobrooks appeared to support the County Executive at the previous hearing on the bill for this **“important public safety initiative”**, and is **“in support of the County Executive’s initiative.”**

Ms. Lineman also noted that the salaries of Asst State’s Attorneys have been increased from \$40,000 starting to approx \$52,000 in recent years

Delegate Walker asked repeatedly about how the salaries for Assistant State’s Attorneys compare in Montgomery County. He said those salaries appear to begin at \$70,000 in Montgomery County, based on information provided.

Ms. Glass and Lineman also called upon Thomas Himler with the county’s office of budget and management to speak. All noted that some pay/salaries on the information they provided dated back to 2011 and were not current.

Mr. Himler said the starting salary figure may be misunderstood since the real pay wages earned by the prosecutors a based on survey studies and individual terms of employment.

(He later added that individual Assistant State’s Attorneys are paid more than the starting based on experience and qualifications, so that the introductory figure is not always accurate. The salaries have increased over the past three years based in part on recommendations from a Human resources study, Himler said)

Delegate Braveboy said the delegation could still pass the bill favorably and then send a letter asking for review of assistant state's attorney salaries so they can be on par with other areas.

Delegate Swain asked why the delegation could not introduce a bill to increase the Assistant State's Attorney Salaries and was told that the positions are not under state legislation and his proposal was not possible under state law.

Delegate Swain asked Himler for reassurance that the county has increased the budget where it is fit to do, and Himler said it has.

Delegate Pena-Melnyk asked if Himler was currently formulating the next Fiscal Year budget. He affirmed, and said will be presented on March 14th.

Delegate Pena-Melnyk, though questions, reviewed the current salaries of State's Attorneys in Montgomery, Baltimore County, Baltimore City – which are all currently higher (\$238K Baltimore, \$199K in Montgomery). She asked if the workload was comparable.

Ms. Glass said that the work was most comparable to Baltimore City.

Delegate Walker noted that there is one State's Attorney and numerous Assistant State's Attorneys.

“Our current State's Attorney ranks 5th (in the state),” he said. “Our deputy state's attorneys, the bodies on the ground, are fifth from the bottom.”

Himler noted the HR surveys and individual raises, as well as collective raises issued to ASAs in recent years. **(See above)**

“Wouldn't it be better to take care of the ones at the bottom instead of the ones at the top?” Walker then asked, adding that he believes the State's Attorney Office does a great job.

Ms. Glass also noted that while the salary proposed for the next Prince George's State's Attorney is set to \$220,000 by 2019, it would be possible that the SA salary in another jurisdiction could be raised during that time.

Delegate Vaughn moved for a vote on the previous Favorable motion. Members present voted unanimously for a Favorable recommendation (18-0, 1 abstained), though several explained their votes for the record:

1. Delegate Summers did not vote, citing rules that preclude voting when faced with a conflict of interest.
2. Delegate Walker said it will be important that the county take care of assistant state's attorney positions as well.

3. Delegate Griffith said she would like to see a salary study of all county court positions and how they compare with the surrounding area, and to include clerks, other court workers than lawyers and also social workers.
4. Chair Ivey said she had “serious concerns” about giving the elected office a salary increase without paying more attention to the Assistant State’s Attorneys. Unlike the elected position, the many Assistant State’s Attorneys can choose to live anywhere, and which county to be employed by. They are the frontline for the court system.

“The problem is, we are not competing regionally for a state's attorney, but we are for the assistant state's attorneys,” Ivey said.

- [PG 409-14](#) - County Board of Education - Public High Schools
- Outdoor Synthetic Turf Fields (**HB 1013**) (**FWA**)

Special Ordered by delegates for One Week by voice vote.

Speakers:

MGM Casino

Mr. Lorenzo Creighton, President & COO of the MGM casino spoke about plans for the facility. Ground may break in the spring for a planned (ambitious) July 2016 opening.

Delegate Griffith asked about community benefits from the project, and emphasized that she would like the reach of that community to extend beyond the immediate area surrounding National Harbor.

Creighton said that the focus of the company is on the spot as a tourism destination to attract DC visitors, as well as Virginia and the region.

MGM is in discussions with the County Council and is “real close” to an agreement, he said.

Delegate Turner noted that MGM does not specifically mention Prince George’s, and appears to advertise as being a DC destination, or a Northern Virginia.

Creighton said MGM would “definitely consider” including the name of the county in it’s market plan.

“Please consider it very strongly,” Chair Ivey said.

Responding to Turner, Creighton said that Labor is included in their construction agreements. And Minority Business Enterprises.

Delegate Vaughn emphasized that MGM should focus also on employing LOCAL vendors once the casino opens. They should include local preference in agreements and arrange to hold pre-bid conferences to ensure as much opportunity as possible.

Creighton cited agreements that call for 30 percent of the business to go to certified minority business. He noted that he “feels good” about the county participation in the project.

St Ann’s & Family Crisis Center

Delegation heard presentations from two organizations providing services

Sister Mary Bader of St. Ann’s center for Children, Youth & families cares for the homeless population of women with children, which has been rising. The organization offers housing, employment help, GED and High School education.

Ms. Shirley Schreffler with the Family crisis Center introduced organization, which is the functioning domestic violence shelter in the county. Has a 24 hour hotline, the safe passage program offers 97 days of shelter.

Both women said that the minimum wage is currently too low for women to care for their children alone in these situations. Both were asked to discuss their financial needs – each organization is in debt and need more than \$100,000 each.

Delegate Pena-Melnyk asked family Crisis Center to continue to work with CASA de Maryland.

Delegate Washington spoke of need for support of these organizations.

County Executive Rushern Baker also spoke, accompanied by Himler again and Mr. Aubrey Thager with the business and economic development office.

Himler outlined the county budget challenges. Though assessments have started to rise for first time since recession in this year’s round, income tax revenues are less than expected.

There are lots of long-term items in the pipeline that we are hanging on (for) right now.”

Delegate Holmes asked about state financing needs and to provide information on what they require.

Delegate Griffith called for continued planning on how to improve the transportation infrastructure in the county to accommodate growth.

Delegate Washington asked that the county grow “new” industry jobs in new fields like cyber security

Delegate Pena-Melnyk asked that the county please consider helping out the Family Crisis Center and St. Ann’s. It was noted by Himler and Baker as “on our list”.

Meeting concluded at approximately 11 a.m.

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