



City of Takoma Park

City Manager Comments

Report for City Council Meeting of March 4, 2020

Information to Share

Coronavirus (Covid-19) Update

As of March 4, there are no confirmed cases of novel coronavirus (Covid-19) in our region. CDC still considers the risk to the general U.S. population to be low at this time. Public health efforts are focused on containing spread and mitigating the impact of this virus. Health officials encourage the following actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently-touched objects and surfaces.

Misinformation about coronavirus can create fear and hostility that hurts people and makes it harder to keep everyone healthy. We can fight stigma and support others by sharing accurate information and staying informed through reputable, trusted sources.

The City of Takoma Park is monitoring information from the CDC and regional health departments. We are also looking at potential impacts if many staff are out sick, if schools close, or if there is a geographically-specific outbreak that may affect us. We have Emergency Operation Plans and Continuity of Operation Plans for pandemics and we will follow those procedures if needed.

For more detailed and up-to-date information, check the websites of the [CDC](#) and the [Montgomery County Health Department](#).

And, wash your hands for 20 seconds – it really helps!

Community Grants

The City of Takoma Park is currently accepting applications for its Community Grants Program now through Thursday, March 12, 2020. Projects that provide greater access to the arts and sciences in Takoma Park are eligible for up to \$10,000 in financial

support. Additionally, although not required, the City is encouraging applications for programming that connects arts and sciences with skills that promote job-readiness for low-and-moderate-income Takoma Park residents. To apply, visit the Community Grants page link at TakomaParkMD.gov/Grants.

Citizenship Application Clinic

HCD is partnering with the Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center to host a Citizenship Application Clinic on Saturday, March 7th from 10:30 am to 2:30 pm here at the Community Center. Immigration attorneys will be available to provide assistance in completing naturalization applications. The attorneys will also provide assistance with fee waivers or reduced fee application.

This clinic is for individuals who are at least 18 years old; have lived in the United States as a green card holder for more than 5 years, and have been physically present in the US for more than 2.5 years.

Takoma Park Library in the News

Despite being a small library, the Takoma Park, Maryland Library is considered a leader in graphic books and comics. Children and Teen Services Librarian Karen MacPherson had a recent article in the Washington Post that is being promoted by national advocates for comics. For example, TOON Books has sent out an email to librarians, teachers and others in the children's book world to promote the article. (TOON Book founder Françoise Mouly, who has been involved in the comics world for decades, is quoted in MacPherson's piece.) And, County Councilmember Will Jawando was impressed by the collection during his recent visit and has returned with family members to take advantage of our strong collection. Kudos!

Bus Rapid Transit

The County Executive included continued support for Bus Rapid Transit, including for the New Hampshire Avenue corridor, in the Capital Improvement Program Budget (FY22-FY24) for Montgomery County. Takoma Park has long advocated for BRT on New Hampshire Avenue, recognizing the importance of good public transit options for the diverse, multi-jurisdictional population that would benefit from BRT on New Hampshire Avenue and to provide additional opportunities to address the climate change crisis. We recently became aware of the pressure by local groups to move funds currently allocated in the CIP for Bus Rapid Transit for MD-355, Viers Mill Road and New Hampshire Avenue (MD-650) to dedicated lanes on Route 29 and the White Flint Metro Station north entrance instead. It is important to note that in order for BRT work to be eligible for Federal funds, the preliminary engineering work and environmental studies must be completed first. If this work does not move forward, the possibility of BRT on MD-355, Viers Mill Road and New Hampshire Avenue becomes more and more remote.

The City of Takoma Park continues to advocate for the inclusion of the County's plans for BRT on New Hampshire Avenue and has sent a letter to the County Council as they consider the funding in tomorrow's Transportation and Environment Committee meeting.

Lincoln Avenue Mural Project

The City received sixty proposals from artists for the Lincoln Avenue Mural project. The Arts and Humanities Commission will be considering the proposals at their regular meeting on March 24, at 7:00 p.m. in the Takoma Park Community Center auditorium.

Library Renovation Costs

At the last City Council meeting, architect Greg Lukmire provided new cost estimates for the Library renovation project. A number of questions were raised and a work session to discuss the cost information is scheduled for next week. Here is a summary of the cost information we had received to date. Please note that we have not rechecked the numbers with the architect as he is unavailable this week.

Originally, the proposal to renovate the Library was simply to renovate the interior without extending the footprint of the building. Costs were limited to interior renovations and HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) improvements. Because of the need to meet ADA requirements for restrooms and shelving aisles, usable space and book shelving would need to be decreased.

In 2016, new Councilmembers Qureshi and Kovar advocated for increased space to meet the needs for programming and for young adults, while providing enough space to retain the same number of books and study areas of the current library. Based on this new scope, there was interest in taking out an infrastructure bond to help pay for the reconstruction. In 2017, the City borrowed \$7 million to help pay for the library work and also borrowed \$2 million to help pay for two road reconstruction projects. The \$7 million was not assumed to be the entire cost of the project, but was determined to be a reasonable amount to borrow given that there were other funds that could be used (such as Cable grant funds of up to about \$2 million – now up to \$2.5 million) or pursued (such as the two State Bond Bills that we have received, for a total of \$300,000).

As we worked with the architect on plans for the renovated building, several challenges and opportunities arose. First, a flood plain study was required to be done. Once the baseline study was conducted, it was clear that a new library with a floor about a foot higher than the current floor would be needed to provide protection from flooding, particularly given the impacts of climate change. Second, a review showed that the combined Library and Community Center complex does not have enough toilets to meet Code. Restrooms in both the Library and the Community Center need to be renovated and expanded. Finally, as we looked at how the Library could be better integrated into the Community Center building, we saw that some efficiencies could occur by reorienting the Recreation Department's offices in its current location.

Greg Lukmire first presented cost estimates in March 2019 related to the need to adapt the plans due to the initial flood plain study. The numbers did not include estimates for cost escalation to the construction mid-point, partly because the Council was considering options in response to the flood study. The same numbers were presented in July 2019, at which point the Council directed the architect to proceed with design work and to report back with refined cost information in conjunction with further work on the flood plain study.

Estimated cost information is refined as the plans become better defined. And, market forces can and do affect cost estimates. A rough comparison of the cost estimates from March of 2019 and February 2020 follows. One element that is very general is the soft cost number. We will be working to refine it.

<i>Description</i>	<i>March 2019</i>	<i>February 2020</i>
Site Work / Pkg Lot	\$250,000	\$679,508
New Construction/Addition	\$6,877,500	\$5,835,698
Renovation/Rec Dept*	\$405,000	\$553,402
Escalation & Contingency		\$1,270,582
Construction Total	\$7,532,500	\$8,339,190
Soft Costs**	\$1,506,500	\$1,500,000
Estimated Total Project	\$9,039,000	\$9,839,190

*Renovation/Rec Dept includes the Recreation Department space, most of the octagon area and the adjacent Community Center toilet rooms. The Recreation Department space may be up to about one-third of the space. We can ask to get future costs separated out for that work, as it is not technically related to the library project.

**Soft costs and other project costs had been estimated to be about 20% of construction costs in 2019. Those costs include design fees, furnishings, moving/temporary facility, permits, hazmat removal, testing during construction, construction contingency and city internal costs. Because there is some overlap of these categories in the February 2020 numbers (for contingencies and hazmat removal), I kept the soft cost amount about the same as the March 2019 figure.

Revenue Amounts for the Library project identified to date include the \$7 million infrastructure bond, the \$300,000 in State grant funds (called "Bond Bills") and up to about \$2.5 million in Cable grant funds (of the \$3.3 million available) for total revenue of approximately \$9,800,000.

These numbers will continue to be refined as design work is done and as detailed information on the soft costs is received.