



City of Takoma Park

## City Manager Comments

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### Report of April 14, 2021

#### COVID-19 Related Information

##### **All residents 16 years of age and older can now be vaccinated in Maryland!**

Please get vaccinated as soon as possible. Although there is a pause in the Johnson & Johnson vaccines, there are still many appointments now available for the other vaccines. Kudos to the scientists and health officials for the high level of cautiousness with any report of issues with vaccines. We know what the coronavirus can do, and we need to protect ourselves and others!

Refer to both the [Maryland Vaccine Website](#) and the [Montgomery County Vaccine Information](#) page to learn more and to pre-register. If you are unsure what to do, call one of these phone numbers: State of Maryland: 1-855-MD-GOVAX, or Montgomery County: 240-777-2982.

##### **COVID-19 testing in Takoma Park**

COVID-19 testing continues this Saturday in Takoma Park at the Recreation Center on New Hampshire Avenue. There will be NO COVID-19 testing next Saturday, April 24. For details on other testing options, please see the information here: [Montgomery County Testing Sites](#).

##### **COVID-19 Dashboard**

Each week, the City's COVID-19 Dashboard is updated. The most recent one is here: [COVID 19 Dashboard](#).

#### Important Information From the Past Week

##### **Double Homicide**

One week ago in the early morning hours, a resident shot and killed two men in the parking lot of his condominium building in Takoma Park. Excellent police investigative work led to an arrest and collection of evidence and documentation for a strong case. We mourn the lives lost, Dominique Williams and James Lionel Johnson, and send our sympathies to their families and to the survivor of the attack, Michael Thomas. The shooter, David Hall Dixon, was an off duty Pentagon police officer. He is being held in the Montgomery County Detention Center and will not be out on bond.

Through media coverage of the homicide, a video was released of an earlier incident on May 6, 2020 involving Dixon, showing him pointing a long gun at a woman in the condominium lobby. Police have now also charged Dixon for assault in that incident. Prior to the release by the media, the Takoma Park Police had not seen the video. However, we have confirmed that the video was given to the Pentagon Force Protection Agency (PFPA) where Dixon was employed.

Takoma Park Police had responded to the May 6 dispute between Dixon and the woman, with Dixon reporting being assaulted by the woman and his use of pepper spray. Neither party wished to press charges regarding their dispute and neither person mentioned the earlier assault with a long gun by Dixon. The use of pepper spray to defend oneself while being assaulted is not a crime. However, Dixon's use of pepper spray was reported by the Takoma Park Police to the PFPA. The PFPA would be responsible for investigating whether the use of force taken by Dixon was taken within PFPA policy.

Both the May 2020 and recent cases are ongoing investigations. In addition, to ensure that Takoma Park Police have handled both cases appropriately, a comprehensive review of the Takoma Park Police Department response is being done, including all aspects of the case, press releases and follow up. The review will identify how well or not all policies, procedures or best practices were followed and may provide recommendations on improvements for handling future incidents.

These incidents are traumatic at any time, and there is so much pain right now nationwide. We send our sympathies to the families of the victims, the Takoma Overlook community, and all for whom these incidents are particularly painful.

### **County Executive Proposes to Only Rebate 60 Percent of Road Maintenance Tax Duplication Funds**

The municipalities of Montgomery County learned yesterday that a March 11 proposal for revising the tax duplication rebate program would only rebate 60% of the Transportation category. Transportation is the category that rebates funds for road maintenance in municipalities. As with all tax duplication funds, the County collects property tax from municipal property owners for some services it doesn't provide and is supposed to refund those amounts to the appropriate municipality. The Montgomery County municipalities believed they had an agreement with the County Executive to rebate the full amount of the Transportation formula. The formula, which is the per mile cost of County road maintenance applied to the number of miles of roadway in each municipality, is accurate and is easily calculable. What was not agreed to is the idea that municipalities would only receive 60% back.

Imagine being overcharged by a store and then, when demanding a refund, being told it is the store's policy to only refund 60% of the overpayment!

Imagine a municipality only repaving 3/5 of the width of a road, or only paying its paving contractors 3/5 of their invoice amount, or only paying a Public Works employee just 3/5 of their paycheck!

The Montgomery County Chapter of the Maryland Municipal League is preparing a response to the County Executive's proposal and is **urging the County Council to vote to pay the full tax duplication amount**. That would mean adding \$5.2 million to the just under \$9 million proposed to be rebated to the 20 municipalities eligible for payments. It would mean an additional \$468,115 for Takoma Park for FY22 and then negotiations for a fair Police Rebate formula would need to take place to determine the right amount for those services, beginning in FY23.

**Please contact the County Executive and the County Council to demand that the County pay the full amount of tax duplication money this year and every year.** Council President Tom Hucker can be reached at [Tom.Hucker@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:Tom.Hucker@montgomerycountymd.gov). Other contact information will be posted on our City's [Tax Duplication](#) page once it is updated.

### **Takoma Junction Redevelopment Project Review is Paused**

On Monday evening, a special City Council Meeting was held to receive presentations on the City's Takoma Junction Redevelopment Project and hold breakout sessions for the public to be able to ask questions about proposed site plan elements the City Council will be considering. One piece of information, the review by the Maryland Department of Transportation State Highway Administration (MDOT SHA) of the proposed layby for Takoma Park-Silver Spring Coop deliveries, was supposed to be provided by June 2019 for the Montgomery County development review process. When it hadn't been provided after months of repeated requests, the City and County moved forward on the review and the City's development partner, Neighborhood Development Company, refined their plans based on the comments received. On Tuesday, April 13, the City received a letter, first dated April 6 and then corrected to the date of April 13, indicating MDOT SHA's comments on the layby plans.

NDC's engineers are reviewing the comments and preparing options to address the elements in the letter from MDOT SHA. While the City has postponed its schedule of a Work Session discussion today, a Public Hearing on April 28 and final vote on May 5, we will see what options are being proposed and will look for dates to continue the review of the site plan. To get an overview of the project and see the plans, see the [agenda](#) and/or watch the [video](#) of the April 12 Special Council Meeting. Comments on the project can be left on the [Junction project webpage](#) at this [link](#).

### **Good News!**

#### **Before and Aftercare and Summer Camp Can Be Free!**

We have space in our City's Before and After-school Care programs. And, the Summer Camp Guide is online and registration will begin May 3 for scholarship awardees and May 7 for all other City residents.

If a family has been financially negatively impacted by the pandemic, the programs are free. Just register and check the appropriate box for the scholarship. We want our great kids back in our programs – we miss the smiles, giggles, creativity, learning and fun!

#### **Fitness Expo Was a Success!**

Speaking of fun, our Recreation Department put on a successful Fitness Expo last Saturday at the Recreation Center on New Hampshire Avenue. Having the activities outdoors helped garner additional attention and Ms. Doris Duarte of Hampshire Towers also helped promote it. Kudos to Recreation Center Supervisor Vince Cain and the entire Recreation Department team!