

Worman's Mill Civic Association membership meeting May 20, 2015 Minutes Homewood

Joe Voltz introduced County Executive Jan Gardner at 6:45 pm. He cataloged an extensive history of her accomplishments to the audience of over 60 residents.

Jan Gardner followed the introduction by sharing information about how the new Frederick County charter government is working. She stated that she is happy to be the first county executive because of the increased power and recognition her position brings for Frederick. She then identified several steps she has taken to meet the goals and promises of her campaign and explained how she has used her position to address the needs of Frederick County at the state level.

First, she and council president, Bud Otis, have developed a partnership between Frederick County and the 12 other major Maryland municipalities by joining them in a meeting once a month. In the past, this meeting was held once a year. In addition she has developed a transition team to talk to "the Big Seven" other Maryland county executives, to share ideas, solutions and mutual concerns. Further, she has spent time in Annapolis, attending legislative meetings as well as meeting informally with the Governor and senate president.

Other important meetings and accomplishments were identified. These included a meeting with Delegate Carol Kruhm to initiate both tax fairness and cost sharing among all Maryland county representatives prior to developing their budgets. This is a new concept, and it required both counties and municipalities to work together harmoniously.

Jan Gardner also attended Governor Hogan's inauguration and his State of the State address. She met with state senators and congressmen, focusing on the needs of Ft. Detrick in the face of a shrinking federal budget and Frederick County's biotech industry. Jan mentioned Astra Zenca, a pharmaceutical manufacturer that has brought 500 new jobs to Frederick County over the past two years. Their current research is identifying ways of using the human immune system to fight cancer.

An additional venture was creating a transition team of private sector and government employees to examine the structure of government and to identify organizational issues to address. These issues include how bills are introduced, how budgets are handled and how the big 4 budget items are addressed: education, jobs, seniors and community needs.

Jan also created a task force on ethics. She ran her campaign on restoring trust in government. She is allowing 120 days for the task force to review ethics and provide recommendations. The recommendations are due in June.

To address educational matters, Jan meets once a month with Superintendent Albans and the Board of Education. She has hired an educational liaison. She has set a goal of

establishing goals for education within the next 4 years. She is proud that Kempton ES was named a Blue Ribbon School. She noted that in her visit to this school, she saw a wonderful program in which 5th graders mentor kindergartners. For the first time in six years, educational funding exceeds the bare minimum “maintenance of effort” by 4.2 million. Jan stated that “education is fundamentally important to long term prosperity”. Astra Zenca wants an educated work force.

To address this need for an educated work force, Frederick Community College received an increase in funding to add faculty to their physics department. A concern of FCC faculty is that the “target audience” is not dropping out, but is taking longer to complete degrees due to increases in the cost of tuition. Another educational entity, CREST (center for research and education in science and technology) also is a focus of Jan’s. CREST is funded by the private sector, is focused on science and technology, and supports biotech and life science companies by providing a “pipeline” in which higher education workers can receive Master’s and PhD degrees.

Jan then shared statistics on the Frederick County library system: over 100,000 resident visits, over 1.6 million on line visits, and 244,000 items checked out every month. In spite of this high usage, there has been no increase in funding for 6 years.

Other topics covered included the following:

- The downtown conference center, which will be privately owned, will have public money used only for traditional infrastructure-in this case- a parking deck.
- FITZI (Frederick Innovative Technology, Inc.) is designed to keep millennials in Frederick.
- A new IT company is moving into the old knitting mill as one of many partnering efforts to create re-development in Frederick city.
- Transportation is an important process that uses public feedback to identify priorities and send these requests to the state. One of the top priorities is the widening of route 15, including a “grey” separated intersection at route 26 and Monocacy Blvd.

Jan’s next two topics covered senior residents and public safety. Demographics for those 65 and older will grow twice as fast in Frederick County as it is predicted to grow in Florida. This presents opportunities and challenges. We need to take advantage of highly qualified retired volunteers. Those 85 and older present the largest growth rate group and will contain a frailer population. A needs assessment and recommendations for this group will be completed (paid for by the federal government).

As for Citizens and Montevue, the county owned this property for 150 years. It has been used as an alms/poor house and for nursing home care. The last Board of County Commissioners’ sale to Aroara Holding was not completed due to protests. The sale is now suspended and the parties are negotiating. A formal mediation will be held in June where the parties will state what they want and a mediator will find common ground. “This was a big campaign issue for me,” Jan Gardner stated, “because Montevue is a safety net, serving the indigent elderly.” Revenue from social security, as well as the changing number of residents, were not factored into the amount Frederick County owes

Aurora Holding. The math was not correct or completed before the sale.

Another senior issue is Meals on Wheels, a service which is expanding. Jan recently went on a delivery route with a volunteer and realized that this service provides social/emotional support as well as a personal connection in addition to food. She has proposed adding one nurse to serve as a case worker to connect recipients of food deliveries with additional needed services such as bill paying, plumbing, etc.

To augment public safety, which includes fire, EMS, the sheriff's office, and court house security, Jan has proposed adding additional staff. This includes 4 more deputies and 10 additional fire fighters. These fire fighters will replace volunteers. The paid fire fighters will ensure rapid response times. In addition, a new fire station is slated for Middletown and another is proposed for North Frederick.

Jan stated that her proposed budget, submitted on April 15, was returned with very few, minor changes. She believed that it would pass tomorrow. She is planning to review privatization contracts, believing that many of these contracts would be cheaper to do "in house."

Prior to answering residents' questions, Jan concluded with a few observations. She believed that reducing heroin addiction fatalities and non fatal overdoses is a critical health care concern as is substance abuse in general. She believes that Dr. Barb Brookmeyer, with the same budget she has had since 2000, has been successful in operating a peer recovery coaching program. It uses a model similar to AA sponsors.

People age 65-75 are downsizing and looking to live in and around the city. Millennials don't want to commute or have big houses. The 32,000 homes already approved in the county pipeline are out of line with what people are currently in the market to buy. This is a disconnect caused by the long delay between zoning approval and build out.

Jan provided her email: Jgardner@frederickcountymd.gov and phone 301 600 3190.

Questions:

1. Q. Will you hire a coordinator to avoid duplication?

A. No, we all know each other.

2. Q. How will the Win case affect Frederick County revenue? A. We've put \$2 million in reserve. Montgomery will take the biggest hit. This will help people who have income from out of state.

3. Q. What's happening with the Monrovia Town Center?

A. Citizens sued the decision. County Commissioner Paul Smith sent the rezoning case back to the county. On June 9 at 6:00 pm at Winchester Hall, the public hearing will be held before the county council (not the county executive). I don't know how it will pan out.

4. Q. What is the status of the Frederick Airport?

A. The City of Frederick manages the airport. The length of the runway will never be expanded to include commuter traffic. Hangar fees are not competitive with other airports.

5.Q. Will more money go to library bricks & mortar?

A. The library is part of the state system guided by a Board of Trustees. Since parents still bring their kids in for story time, traditional services will most likely continue for the time being. However, it is hard to even conceive what will happen in the future.

6. Q. The City of Frederick changed the condo water rates to the highest commercial rate.

A. That's a city issue. The problem is the single meter system. I suggest that you show up at the city meetings and state what your solution is. Sit in the front row when voting occurs. New condos should have individual meters.

7. Q. Two Over Two homes are going up everywhere. Are developers really paying attention to the market?

A. Some are, such as in Urbana, but in the long term, these homes are not appropriate for the demographic who will be buying. Developers need to reconsider/renege contracts. Locking down contracts for 25 years is a problem since market conditions change fast.

8. Q. The recycle bin lid doesn't stay shut. Stuff blows away. A. We've discussed putting a clip on them, but we've spent millions on the bins and are not in a position now to spend more.

9. Q. Carroll County provided special diets for Meals on Wheels. Is Frederick County able to do the same?

A. Yes, the adult detention kitchen services provides them now and has received good feedback.

10. Q. What can be done about the congestion that will occur when the Walmart is built at the intersection of 26 and Monocacy Blvd.

A. It will create traffic problems. Talk to your city officials. Call the Mayor and Aldermen. They don't want to hear from other elected officials. I did request an entrance to the Walmart property from 26, but this was denied.

Jan Gardner was formally thanked and applauded. The meeting concluded at 8:00 pm.