



MAYOR TAKISHA D. JAMES MONTHLY REPORT FOR APRIL 2019



Above: Mayor James with Bladensburg Volunteer Fire Department Engine #9 at their annual banquet.
Below: Mayor James and Yvonna Baden, the awesome Winner of the Call for Duty to the Community Award for answer 1,335 calls.
Ms. Baden is also a dedicated member of the Bladensburg Police Department's Dispatch Team.
Former Mayor Walter L. James, Jr. was a great volunteer for the Earth Day Cleanup!





Row 1 – Volunteers for the Bladensburg Earth Day Cleanup
Row 2-Officer Tanksley presenting during the Human Trafficking Event &
Donations for the Food Market organized by Rogers Heights and Port Towns Elementary School.
Row 3-Photos from the Annual Egg Eggstravaganza.

Summary of Community Activities & Meetings

April 3: Brothers & Sisters Meeting | The Town of Bladensburg Team held one meeting for the mentoring program in April due to spring break. We followed up on lessons shared in the previous month on Self-Esteem and Peer Pressure before moving the focus to Bullying and Stress Management.

April 5: PGCMA sponsored a Wine and Cheese networking event in partnership with Prince George's County Councilmembers Rodney Streeter, Mel Franklin & Calvin Hawkins. | The purpose of the event was to highlight minority and small business owners in Prince George's County. Council Member Lundy and I attended this event to network with our County Council representatives and other municipal leaders.

April 6: Bladensburg Volunteer Fire Department Annual Banquet | The Bladensburg Volunteer Fire Department invited me to attend their 91st Annual Banquet on behalf of the Town. It was an honor to be with the brave and dedicated men and women as well as their family and friends. The banquet offered an opportunity to celebrate their many accomplishments in 2018. We are so thankful for their tireless service to Bladensburg and surrounding communities.

April 9: Meeting with Members of the Hamlet Woods II HOA Board | Captain Collington and I met with members of the Board to discuss concerns regarding the safety of residents. Since the time of our meeting, we've been working with them to resolve their public safety concerns. Residents in this community have already commented on improvements in their community since our meeting.

April 9 & April 16: Sustainable Maryland Working Group Meetings | During the first Port Towns Quarterly Meeting of 2019 we discussed the need to renew the Sustainable Maryland application. The Port Towns leadership expressed approval for creating a working group comprised of an elected official from each community along with community stakeholders. During the month of April, we held two meetings to review the application process and begin brainstorming on sustainable priorities for the Port Towns over the next five years. We agreed to work to create S.M.A.R.T. goals (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, & Timely) to ensure we put the Port Towns in a position to best meet identified goals by the end of this next term. We heard from representatives of the Maryland Department of Housing and Community Development who offered critical guidance to assist us with this process. Member of the working group brainstormed about the following key areas:

- Housing
- Planning and Land Use
- Environment
- Economy
- Quality of Life
- Transportation

As part of the brainstorming process we also worked to identify the top strengths and weaknesses for each of these areas. Discussion also included consideration of possible strategies and outcomes. After the working group further refines the goals, outcomes and strategies we'll move forward with scheduling a community meeting to gather additional input from the community.

April 10: Bladensburg Police Department Dispatchers' Meeting | I was invited to attend the meeting and hear the concerns of our dedicated dispatchers who provide a high-level of support for our patrol officers, the overall department and Town residents.

April 11: Town of Bladensburg Budget Worksession #1 | The Town Council and Staff began holding a series of meetings to discuss each line item of the budget and to make recommendations for improved services to Town residents. This meeting was the first of several budget meetings held to keep residents informed on the decisions behind the budget plan.

April 13: Human Trafficking Event hosted by Victory Grace Center | The youth ministry for VGC, referred to as D.I.V.A.S., held this information workshop to educate the community about human trafficking and to offer resources to aid with human trafficking. Our very own Officer Cedric Tanksley was a featured speaker along with detectives from the Prince George's County Police Department and an officer from the Maryland Park Police. It was very useful to hear perspectives from law enforcement as they aim to tackle this problem. Officer Tanksley did an awesome job presenting!

April 13: Earth Day Cleanup Effort | The Town of Bladensburg partnered with the Friends of Quincy Run to expand the reach of our annual cleanup for Earth Day. This year we supported the Quincy Run location and cleaned up 57th Avenue (between Annapolis Road and Bladensburg High School). Special thanks to staff for their support with this effort, especially Gabino and Diamond. I also want to express my gratitude to Council Member Carletta Lundy for her leadership with being our project manager and securing support from the International High School of Langley Park.

April 17: Town of Bladensburg Patriotic Events Team Planning Meeting | A meeting was held with Diane Griffin, Renee Green and myself met to discuss upcoming patriotic events. We confirmed the plan for the Memorial Day Ceremony which is being held in partnership with the American Legion Post #131. We also discussed the program.

April 18: PGCMA Monthly Meeting | The monthly meeting featured a presentation by Mr. Kipling Reynolds of Maryland-National Capital Park & Planning Commission. His presentation provided an over of his team's responsibilities which includes:

- Managing the County's comprehensive planning process
- Performing community outreach to ensure meaningful public participation and engagement in all projects, plans, and studies
- Preparing plans and studies to guide future growth and physical development in the County
- Collaboration with various local, state, federal, and County agencies in implementing Plan 2035 General Plan-Blueprint for Tomorrow and area master and sector plans
- Monitoring development activity within the entire County
- Reviewing development proposals for consistency with Plan 2035 General Plan-Blueprint for Tomorrow, and area master and sector plans

April 20: Town of Bladensburg Egg Eggstravaganza | The Bladensburg Police Department's COPS Unit organized another successful community event, which featured an Easter egg hunt with 3,000 eggs, sack races, egg tosses, relay egg races, face painting and free refreshments.

April 23: Town of Bladensburg Budget Worksession #2 | Town Department heads continued walking the Council through department budgets for the purpose of reviewing each budget line items to determine whether more or less resources are needed to provide services to Town residents.

April 24: Food Market for Rogers Heights and Port Towns Elementary School & Meeting with Rogers Heights, S.H.I.N.E. CDC & Council Member Lundy | The monthly food bank was held outside of Rogers Heights for the month of April. Council Member Lundy and I assisted with setup. Additionally, we met with Dr. Bottoms and Ms. Cooper to start discussing the annual community resource fair and back to school event held in August. Normally this event is hosted by Port Towns and Rogers Heights Elementary offering free backpacks to students in conjunction with a community health fair. Given the volume of back to school events taking place on the same day in our community we discussed the possibility of holding one large event in the month of August along with other community partners to maximize resources. More discussion will continue over the next month to assess this event.

April 29: Newton Green Tenant Council Meeting | Council Member Carletta Lundy and I attended the meeting to share information with the newly formed tenant council. It's great to see the residents working together and advocating for the betterment of the residents in the building.

April 30: Community Budget Meeting | This was the first meeting held for community input and we received very positive feedback from the community regarding the priorities areas for the budget year. Additionally we also heard from a young resident about the significant way in which the resources allocated to the Police Department for the Brothers & Sisters program has changed his life. This was a tremendously inspiring moment for the Council as we were able to see the direct impact of Town resources on a young resident.

Comment [DS1]: This has not been completed yet. Diane is just now reaching out to the schools.

Legislative Updates

The Maryland 2019 Legislative Session came to an end at midnight April 9th. Following are a few updates from this year's session:

- Funding was secured for a new turf football field for Bladensburg High School. This has been a significant safety concern for our students. This issue has also drawn local media attention due to the poor conditions of the football field and track.
- Caused CSX to remove Railroad Tracks from Columbia Park Road in Landover, MD.
- Secured grant to reopen the Mt. Rainier Library to include asbestos abatement.
- Funding and commissioning for an initial study of a new MARC train station between Cottage City and Brentwood.

Senator Malcolm Augustine sponsored the following bills which passed:

SB144- Victims and Witnesses - U Nonimmigrant Status - Certification of Victim Helpfulness | Assures timely certification of helpfulness of undocumented victims of crime with authorities towards a U-Visa. The U nonimmigrant status (U visa) is set aside for victims of certain crimes who have suffered mental or physical abuse and are helpful to law enforcement or government officials in the investigation or prosecution of criminal activity.

SB319- Maryland Transit Administration – State Employees – Free Ridership (Transit Benefit for State Employees) | This bill codifies and extends mass transit benefits for state employees.

SB403- Behavioral Health Administration – Outpatient Civil Commitment Pilot Program | Allows family members to refer family members to an outpatient civil commitment Behavioral Health services pilot for certain individuals suffering from mental illness.

SB631- Health Insurance – Coverage for Mental Health Benefits and Substance Use Disorder Benefits – Treatment Criteria | This bill requires Insurance Carriers to utilize the most recent industry standard for care of Substance Use Disorders.

Other Bills to Note:

SB181 Tax Break for Working Parents | This bill provides \$9 Million to give working parents a greater Childcare Tax Credit to provide relief for approximately 110,000 Marylanders.

SB895/HB1169 Keeping Tobacco Out of the Hands of Children | Raises the legal smoking age to 21 and increases the penalty for those who sell tobacco products to minors.

SB759 /HB 768: Keeping Prescription Drugs Affordable | This bill created the Prescription Drug Affordability Board to review the cost of prescription drugs and price increases as well as look at the best ways to bring down the cost (through bulk purchasing, upper payment limits, etc.).

SB516 Clean Energy Jobs Act | Increases the Maryland Renewable Energy Portfolio Standard from 25% by 2020 to 50% by 2030. This bill will help create more jobs in the clean energy sector, while also reducing Maryland's dependence on fossil fuels.

SB541 Keeping Predators out of Schools | This strengthens background checks on potential employees in Maryland school districts. It also prohibits the use of non-disclosure agreements with individuals who are convicted of sexual abuse of a minor or other sexually related offenses.

SB654 Lowering Property Taxes for Maryland's Seniors | Current law states a resident must be at least 65 and have lived in the same residence for 40 years. The new bill will remove the 40-year stipulation and allow jurisdictions to establish their own length of time a senior has to live in their home to qualify for the property tax cut.

SB280 & HB 166 - Giving Working and Middle-Class Families A Raise - \$15 Minimum Wage | The Maryland General Assembly passed bills to increase Maryland's minimum wage for all employers to \$15/hour by 2025. In order to ease the impact on small businesses with less than 15 employees an additional year and a half will be allowed to reach the \$15/hour threshold. Congratulations to Delegate Fennell for being a champion of this legislation!

SB839-Helping Returning Citizens Get a Job | This bill prohibits employers from asking applicants about their criminal record in the early stages of the employment process. This bill contains exemptions for individuals who provide care to children and vulnerable adults.

Legislation Updates Pertaining to Resources for Prince George's County:

- \$1.5 Billion of state aid was approved.
- \$53 Million additional funding for teacher pay and more Pre-K opportunities.
- Established a Public Private Partnership framework for the future construction of 18 new schools.
- Enabled illegal dumping legislation that raises fines to \$5,000.
- Established and funded \$7 Million annually for the National Capital Strategic Economic Development Program to address vacant homes and blight inside the beltway.

Budget Highlights Benefitting the State of Maryland

- For the first time over \$7 Billion in total public education funding will be provided to increase funding for special education services, teacher salaries, full-day Pre-K, services for low income families and additional funding for schools in areas with concentrated poverty.
- \$500 Million for school construction
- The \$6.4 billion in higher education funding.
- Over \$11.2 Billion for the state's Medicaid program.
- Increased funding for behavioral and mental health providers.
- Increased funding for those who provide services for developmentally disabled residents.
- \$2.1 Billion for transportation projects across the state.
- \$9.3 Billion for local jurisdictions for aid to local governments.
- The General Assembly spent \$255 Million to fund initial recommendations for the Blueprint for Maryland's Future (Kirwan Commission). These funds are dedicated to increasing teacher salaries, special education grants, low-income jurisdictions, pre-kindergarten programs, tutoring services, teacher training and more guidance counselors.

Please join us for the following upcoming events and meetings:

May 27, 2019: Join the Town of Bladensburg Patriotic Events Team and the American Legion Post #131 for the annual Memorial Day Ceremony. The service will begin at 11:00 AM at the World War I Memorial (Peace Cross). If there is inclement weather the service will be moved to the Bladensburg Town Hall, 4229 Edmonston Road, Bladensburg, MD 20710.

June 10, 2019: The Town of Bladensburg Council Work Session begins @ 5:30 PM & the Televised Council Meeting begins at 7:00 PM at Town Hall.

July 6, 2019: Join the Town of Bladensburg for the 2nd Annual Fireworks Celebration in honor of Independence Day. The event will take place at the Bladensburg Waterfront Park from 6:00 PM – 9:30 PM.