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Frederick and Washington Counties

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Capital Budget

Education, Business and Administration



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

July 24, 2024

Dear Madam Mayor & Council,

Our City is in crisis and under siege. Blatant and open-air drug use has become commonly accepted by this Administration and now shootings and murders have become a common event in our community. The recent homicide last week being the most recent example of continued chaos. An event that once again demonstrated a lack of urgency and prioritization from City Hall.

It has been quite concerning that the Mayor & Council have not taken a more proactive approach to address the longstanding social issues that have been plaguing our City. However, we are now seeing this issue being compounded with repeated violence in our community.

Remaining silent, with no plan, and no discussion on what or how to address a shootout occurring in broad daylight on our City streets is unacceptable. It has been nearly a week since this incident occurred and there has been nothing put forth publicly by this body to provide any confidence to our shared constituents that the City is actively working to address these concerns.

I welcome the opportunity to assist, discuss, meet, and/or provide support where necessary should this Administration share these concerns and would like to collaborate in an effort to better our community as described below:

- 1) Recognize there is an issue with violence in our community and publicly denounce it. There was no position taken or statement put forth by the Mayor or Council last week even acknowledging that a shootout on our streets had occurred, nonetheless condemning it. We cannot fix a problem if there is not recognition that the problem exists.
- 2) Provide the direction and resources to the Hagerstown Police Department (HPD) to mobilize a multi shift, around the clock unit targeting violent offenders. Call on the Washington County Sheriff's Office and Maryland State Police should you feel you are ill equipped to handle this crisis. Your Administration commands the largest municipal police agency in our County, an agency that has my full support and confidence.
- 3) Work with the City Attorney, HPD, and State's Attorney's office to develop ordinances that could aide in this effort - ordinances to address panhandling, trespassing, disturbances of the peace, etc. need to be re-examined. For years, the City has talked about a drug ordinance similar to Martinsburg, but has yet to establish a viable path forward. Our office stands ready to be part of the conversation should it rise above what your Charter would allow.
- 4) Publicly call on the State's Attorney to work with and support HPD through their targeted efforts moving forward. Repeat violent offenders in our City are not being held accountable for their actions. At a certain point, the City must take a position that the continued plea bargaining by the State's Attorney's office is not acceptable to our shared citizenry.

- 5) End enabling and exasperating the plethora of social services continuing to expand in the core of the City. A more geographic diversification in access to these services is desperately needed. Simply put, change the zoning in the core of the City to focus on positive business development.
- 6) Call on the Public Works Department and the Washington County Health Department to clean up the core of the City - literally clean it up. There are needles and feces all over the place. I am sure we share the same confidence in your Public Works Department to address the trash issues. However, should the Health Department continue to promote and provide needles in our community, they should be held accountable by the City to be the ones cleaning it up daily - not the City and not our citizens.
- 7) Reevaluate the City's financial support to non-profit organizations whose business model thrives on the continued degradation of our community. There are areas of our City that have become overrun by individuals who clearly have no desire to better themselves or contribute positively to our society. Yet, these non-profit agencies continue to cater and attract this very element that is creating disorder throughout the community.
- 8) End the antagonistic challenging in the name of collaboration. Should you wish to truly collaborate, then do that. However, continuing to sit idly by while the community crumbles around us cannot be the continued direction of our City.

Our office has and will remain vocal in these concerns. Collectively we have seen great strides in economic development throughout our City. However, the City has fallen behind when it comes to the overall safety and quality of life that our shared constituents expect. These issues have continued to increase as opposed to decrease under this Administration over the last several years.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter and I look forward to working with you in the near future.

Sincerely,



Paul D. Corderman