

Carrying on the family tradition at La Plata baseball

Sports, Page B1



Officials agree with residents on Cobb Island bridge design

Inside, Page A6

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# Maryland Independent

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Vol. 147, No. 22  
3 sections

Inside



North Point softball ready to go

Sports, Page B1



Tokyo students share tradition, lessons with CCPS

Community, Page B6

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Index

Business	B5
Classified	B12
Community	B6
Editorial/Letters	A8
Obituaries	A7
Sports	B1

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## Permit delays extended for WCD plan

Regulations will be decided on in six months

By MICHAEL SYKES II  
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The Watershed Conservation District has been a hot button issue in Charles County for months now, and that does not look to be changing anytime soon.

During their Tuesday meeting, the Charles County Board of Commissioners voted to continue a resolution that would extend transitional provisions that prevent developers from submitting applications for new development in the county before the watershed conservation district's zoning regulations are set.

The commissioners voted 3-1, with Commissioner Bobby Rucci (D) the lone

See **WCD**  
Page A9

## Ice, winds cause massive power outages

Thousands were without electricity due to brush with winter storm Stella

By MICHAEL SYKES II  
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Charles County did not get hit with the same snow that many parts of northern Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia did, but the residual ice storm of Winter Storm Stella still came down hard on county residents.

As of 11:31 a.m. Tuesday, Southern Maryland Electric Cooperative reported that thousands of people were without power in Charles County as a result

See **OUTAGES**  
Page A12



STAFF PHOTOS BY DANDAN ZOU

Eric Fisher sits on a chair in the memorial garden at Jude House on Feb. 24. The rocks nearby memorialize former Jude House residents who died from overdoses.

## Stigma and cost are major barriers inhibiting treatment and recovery

Opioid crisis persists despite increasing treatment and prevention efforts

By DANDAN ZOU  
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Death is no stranger to Eric Fisher.

He had seen it many times. He himself overdosed more than a dozen times. His best friend died from an overdose. Once, he drove an overdosed stranger — who was at the time using along with him — to the hospital.

About six years ago, Fisher, now 34, made inquiry calls to more than a dozen rehab facilities in and out of state. But he couldn't get into a treatment program because he couldn't afford it, the Waldorf resident said.

Around the same time he made those calls, Fisher also committed burglaries



Two empty beds sit next to an occupied bed in a male dorm room at Carol Porto Treatment Center in Prince Frederick on March 9. Program Director Carol Porto said half of her facility's beds are empty because people can't afford to pay for the treatment.

and was later sentenced to 80 years on four counts of first-degree burglary charges. Before being transferred to Jude House to be treated for his addiction in October, he was locked up in a Hagerstown prison for six years.

Fisher considered himself lucky because he didn't become another name added

to the more than 300 drug-related deaths since 2007 in Southern Maryland.

The climbing fatality rate related to drug and alcohol misuse, according to the most recent data from the state's health department, is showing no signs of slowing

See **OPIOIDS**  
Page A10

## Listening tour mines ideas for an updated library system

Town halls engaged community for input

By TIFFANY WATSON  
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The Charles County Public Library System is on its way to becoming a 21st century library system, but in order to do that, the library system is in the midst of changing. We want to be seen as a 21st century library because we will always have books (traditional collections and book talks) but we're also trying to move forward with more innovative programming (having 3D printers, maker spaces, and community conversations)."

On March 2-7, the feedback of local residents was part of the CCPL strategic plan to communicate their thoughts and suggestions by way of several town hall meetings that

occurred across the county at the Waldorf West Branch, Potomac Branch in Indian Head, La Plata Town Hall and Nanjemoy Community Center.

"We asked the community about what they want to see in their library as far as the facilities' masterplan which plans out what we will be doing for the next 10 years. We are doing targeted focus groups and having stakeholder meetings...We want to be in line with what the community wants. We want to give them the programs that they ask for and that the information that they need. A public library is all about its community,"

See **LIBRARY**  
Page A9



STAFF PHOTO BY TIFFANY WATSON

Toni Garvey, from Providence Associates LLC, a library consulting firm based in Arizona, led the town hall at Waldorf West Library. Garvey specializes in library master planning, collection analysis, service plan development, facilities master planning and feasibility studies.

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## WCD

From Page A1

vote of dissent, to grant a six month extension on the resolution. Commissioner Debra Davis (D) was absent from the meeting.

Steve Kaii-Zeigler, the director of the county's Department of Planning and Growth Management, said planning staff would be able to "limit" certain types of development applications that could be submitted under the resolution. The extension approved on Tuesday would extend that resolution for six months, he said.

According to the original resolution, no county officials may process or approve new or pending preliminary subdivision plans, any new or pending site development plans, any new development services permit applications or any new or pending applications for piecemeal rezoning within the boundaries of the area being proposed for the Watershed Conservation District.

That resolution was approved in September, Kaii-Zeigler said. Since then, he said, there has been a lot of progress that has been made.

"Since that time, the staff working with the county attorney's office and the planning commission has developed a series of text amendments and a mapping component that would go with that," Kaii-Zeigler said.

There have been two public hearings on the watershed conservation district since, he said, and many pieces of public input given to the

county outside of any hearings.

The planning commission also had a work session scheduled on the district on Monday evening, but the meeting was delayed another two weeks due to the pending storm.

"We're anticipating the planning commission to be able to complete its work and make its recommendation to you within the next six weeks or so," Kaii-Zeigler said.

The resolution's extension only lasts for another six months, Kaii-Zeigler said, and the county is planning on the process being completed by then. That would give the county commissioners another "four to four and a half months," to have the regulations for the district completed.

County Attorney Rhonda Weaver said it is her recommendation to have the regulations for the district completed within the next six months. Legally, there could be another extension, she said, but stretching the process out for more than a year may not bode well for the county or its citizens.

"We don't want the transition in place for any longer than a year," she said.

Commissioners' President Peter Murphy (D), who, for clarification, asked if there could be another extension after the one the commissioners approved on Tuesday. But ultimately, he said, that is the goal for the commissioners as well.

"I just wanted to know for sure what we were working with," he said. "I think that's the goal of the board as well."

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## LIBRARY

From Page A1

Salazar said.

Toni Garvey from Providence Associates, a library consulting firm based in Arizona, led the town hall at each location. She specializes in library master planning, collection analysis, service plan development, facilities master planning and feasibility studies.

Garvey asked for residents' expectations from their local library in areas such as new technologies, construction and learning how to use personal devices.

"One of the roles of a library is to be able to provide services or equipment that individually we probably won't have because it's not feasible or we can't afford it. It doesn't mean the library needs to have everything but if there are things specifically that the public is looking for then what better place than a library, where everyone can have access to it," Garvey said.

Claudia Bellony-Atanga, chair of the CCPL board of trustees, suggested that the local libraries include technology area with maker space.

"Different libraries have virtual reality areas that you can go in and maker spaces where you can make something or try something new. Also an area for businesses to come and share their products and ideas in small business areas," Bellony-Atanga said.

Many of the local residents suggested a cafe, outdoor space and more comfortable chairs at the local libraries. Others



STAFF PHOTO BY TIFFANY WATSON

Local Charles County residents attend a Charles County Public Library town hall at Waldorf West to give their feedback about what a 21st century library system should be.

suggested having more of an express library to make checking out and returning books easier.

"I'd rather the library have enough computers with internet for kids to get on than to have 3D printers and 3D televisions," said Tiffany Sharpe, a Waldorf resident.

Bryans Road resident Kimberly Darling agreed.

"I think lots of work space and room to plug-in would be great for the libraries," Darling said. "It's really helpful that there are experts on the library staff that can help us use our stuff but I don't think [we need] any additional cutting edge technology."

Waldorf resident James Brown said he would like to see a cafe or coffee area at the local library for those who need to work off site at the library during the week. He also suggested that the library allow military personnel to use a "common access card" in order to check their email.

"Cutting edge as far as knowledge is OK as long as it's not to the detriment

to the population that it serves ... Books aren't going to keep the library relevant — making it a spot for people to come to is what's going to keep the library relevant," Darling said.

Waldorf resident Felix Gilbert suggested a class about protecting kids online as a workshop.

"I always expect the library to be cutting edge and to be pushing those boundaries but more specifically the library being on top of its game in regards to filtering because obviously with new technology comes inappropriate material and I expect the library to be the most safest place," Gilbert said.

Gilbert also suggested adding on conference room space and having businesses grow at the library as a co-working space.

"In most cases I'm also seeing that the library is decreasing space of the collection but increasing the people space for people to interact, build a program and study. Technology is a really challenging area for li-

braries," Garvey said.

Residents at the Waldorf West town hall believed the most important things are inside and outside space, couch areas, a coffee spot, a water fountain, more nature, a fireplace and a play area for kids. They also compared the current facilities of the local libraries and concluded that the amount of parking and space at the La Plata Library Branch and Potomac Library branch is very limited.

Salazar said the information received from the town halls will help the library in planning and prioritizing its current services, allocating resources and identifying new library services and programs. The public input will also help the library prepare for the possibility of building new branches and making building improvements at current locations, including the construction of a new La Plata branch.

For more information, call Salazar at 301-934-9001, ext. 120, or email [jsalazar@ccplonline.org](mailto:jsalazar@ccplonline.org).

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