

April 19, 2010

The Honorable Thomas E. Dernoga, Chair  
Prince George's County Council  
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive  
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772

RE: Proposed FY 2011 Operating Budget and Capital Improvement Program for  
FY 2011 to 2016

Dear Chairman Dernoga:

The Bowie City Council offers the following comments on the Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2011 and the Capital Improvement Program for FY 2011- 2016. Comments on the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning portion of the budget are being sent to the Council in a separate letter.

### **EDUCATION PROJECTS**

#### **New Bowie Area High School**

Construction of a new high school for the Bowie area remains our very highest priority. The current Bowie High School structure, built almost 50 years ago, is consistently overcrowded and inadequate for current needs. While we support other projects, such as the replacement of Tulip Grove Elementary School, the construction of a new elementary school for the Fairwood community, or the renovation of Tall Oaks Career and Technology Center as important and necessary, a new high school in Bowie cannot be postponed. We fear that because of limited funds, these other projects will delay the prospects of getting a new high school built in Bowie. Furthermore we are concerned that the new high school programs and reforms being discussed as a means of balancing enrollments across the School System are still several years away from implementation and from relieving any of the chronic overcrowding at high schools across the County.

The relegation of programmed funding for planning and construction of the high school project, which is so vital to our community, to the "Beyond 6 Years" category is extremely disappointing, given the continued growth in student population in the Bowie area. The City recommends aggressive funding for a new Bowie Area High School in the CIP, with planning funds included in Years 1 and 2 and construction funding in years 3 through 5.

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### **Tulip Grove Elementary School**

There is a project in the budget to build a new, state-of-the-art, “green school” with a capacity of 444 students, to replace the existing Tulip Grove Elementary School. If the existing structure cannot be improved cost effectively through renovations, then we welcome this \$17.7 million project that will address both modernization and capacity needs with an innovative design.

## **COMMUNITY FACILITIES PROJECTS**

### **Northview Fire Station**

City Council is very grateful for the County's funding of the new fire station on Health Center Drive. The facility, which has been open for less than a year, addresses a major gap in coverage and is handling a steady volume of calls for service. We appreciate this major investment in our Town Center neighborhood.

### **South Bowie Branch Library**

The City is pleased to see this very important \$14 million project now under construction. We appreciate the level of community input that was incorporated into this project and look forward to opening of the library in 2011.

### **Sandy Hill Sanitary Landfill**

The proposed CIP includes a major allocation of planning funds (\$2 million) and construction funds (\$4 million) in FY 2011, followed by increased funding levels in Years 2-3 in the out years for post closure care. The City Council hopes that this \$37.9 million project is edging toward completion and conversion into a significant community amenity. Area residents, including those living in Old Town Bowie, who had to put up with the ill-effects of landfill operations for decades were assured that the County would rehabilitate the property for the community's benefit. We look forward to further participation in this process.

## **TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS**

### **New Roadway Connecting MD 197 near Bowie State University with MD 3**

The City Council believes a feasibility assessment of a new roadway linking MD 197 to MD 3 should be undertaken. There is definitely a need to address regional traffic congestion in this MD 450 corridor, east of Race Track Road, and the heavy volume of motorists that are projected to use MD 450, Race Track Road and Jericho Park Road in order to travel between Laurel and Crofton. The City made this recommendation to the District Council and Planning Board in their public hearing on the Master Plan of Transportation (MPOT), the Bowie State/MARC Sector Plan and the Subregion I Area Master Plan. Investigation of this road alignment should be subject of a new project planning study included in the County's CIP.

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### **Church Road**

The City's highest priority for planning includes an upgrade of the entire length of Church Road; however, the project to improve the segment between Mount Oak Road/Woodmore Road and MD 214 has been set back substantially from last year's CIP, and it appears to be languishing since the estimated completion date was revised from 6/2015 to 6/2017. It is unacceptable that all previously programmed funding has been moved to the "Beyond 6 Years" category.

The City Council very strongly feels that the significant recommendations of the Church Road Task Force should be funded aggressively. Because of the overwhelming need for a safer road that provides adequate traffic carrying capacity, full construction funding for the \$9.6 million segment between Mount Oak Road and MD 214 should be programmed to begin in the next (FY 2011) CIP so that the improvements can complement the work under way at the Mount Oak Road/Woodmore Road intersection with Church Road. In addition, the City Council recommends that the project scope be expanded to include the entire Church Road corridor, from Leeland Road to MD 450 with funding in the out years of the CIP. Also, the City Council reiterates its past concern with the current CIP's project description, which states: "City of Bowie has yet to commit to their 50% funding portion of the project". Church Road is a County road located outside of the City limits. The CIP should be revised to delete this wording.

### **Mount Oak Road/Woodmore Road Intersection With Church Road**

The City Council supports the inclusion of over \$15 million in funding for this project through FY 2011. The improvements, which include relocation of Woodmore Road to create a standard four-way intersection at Church Road, are urgently needed and will improve safety and relieve a major traffic bottleneck.

### **Woodmore Road/Mount Oak Road**

In addition to the Church Road project and the intersection project noted above, planning funding for improvements to Woodmore and Mount Oak Roads should be placed in the first years of the CIP. These two projects are essential components of the County's east-west traffic circulation network and, although included in the 2003-2008 CIP, they are no longer listed in the capital program. The approval of many large projects, such as 126 lots at Pleasant Prospect on Woodmore Road, 191 lots at Fairview Manor (Collingbrook) and 498 lots at the southern end of Fairwood, as well as continuing new home construction in this area, depended on these improvements being in place to provide safe access and to address adequate public facilities issues.

### **Old Stage Road**

This County road was partially improved over the years by developers of adjacent subdivisions. However, several gaps currently exist, which make traveling this road extremely dangerous, especially near Old Stage Road's intersection with Church Road. In addition, the Fairwood development will soon be adding 372 single-family homes, east of Church Road, which will use Old Stage Road for their access. Fairwood will extend Old

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Stage Road and establish a new connection to Church Road, creating a continuous through street system. The recent purchase of lots in Fairwood by Greenvest, LLC and that company's subsequent contracts with home builders underscore the limited amount of time left to make improvements to existing Old Stage Road before it is overwhelmed with traffic. The additional homes also under construction by Richmond American at the 21-lot Birchmere Landing project are generating even more traffic. To address this rising pressure from new development, the County should add a new CIP project to upgrade the substandard sections of Old Stage Road over the next two years.

### **Old Town Bowie Pedestrian Improvements**

Sidewalks are badly needed on Chestnut Avenue, Maple Avenue, Duckettown Road and Old Laurel Bowie Road for pedestrian safety on all of these County roads, which provide major transportation links to Old Town Bowie. A field walk with County officials was conducted in 2005 to review some of these issues. In a letter dated October 3, 2008 the Director of the County's Department of Public Works and Transportation indicated the City's recommendations could be addressed through engineering design and establishment of a CIP project in the future. The City respectfully requests that this evaluation occur in the next fiscal year so that these important links can be improved sooner rather than later. Upgrading these pedestrian facilities is in keeping with the City Council's emphasis on *Walkable Communities*, which has seen some success in the past year through completion of new sidewalks, sidewalk retrofits, improved crosswalk delineations and designation of on-road bicycle facilities on 11th Street.

### **Race Track Road Traffic Capacity and Safety Improvements**

A project to upgrade Race Track Road first appeared in the program several years ago to address the community's identified issues of traffic capacity, safety and speeding. A comprehensive approach to these issues is needed, and traffic calming measures, such as a traffic circle, should be examined at the intersection of Race Track Road and Old Chapel Road, to slow vehicle speeds in the vicinity of the Bowie Race Track. In addition, County funding of geometric improvements to Race Track Road, north of Idlewild Drive, is urgently needed to complement the traffic signal system approved there as a result of the Planning Board's approval of the Cornerstone Assembly of God church and school expansion. The City therefore requests that Race Track Road be added back into the CIP.

The asphalt pathway that runs along the side of Race Track Road is also very old and has deteriorated severely. The trail is uneven and has been encroached upon by utility poles and wires to the point that major sections are unusable. Significant improvements are needed to allow the trail to be used safely, especially by school-age children. The Safe Routes to School grant program may be one source of funding for this upgrade project. In addition, the DPW & T Director's October 3, 2008 letter identified that engineering design and a CIP project would be needed to provide sidewalks, curb and gutter and handicap accessible ramps at the Clearfield Drive/Overbrook Lane intersection and between Marquette Lane and Victoria Heights Drive. A logical place to identify these improvements would be under CIP

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Project #FD669761 (School Access Projects) or Project #FD661021 (Curb & Road Rehabilitation).

**Mitchellville Road at Mount Oak Road, Peach Walker Drive, Pittsfield Lane**

We understand that installation of detectable warning surfaces on the existing sidewalk ramps were added to DPW & T's Inventory of Needs list. Since none of these intersections were retrofitted, we request that funding be provided through approval of this CIP.

**Governor Bridge Road and Replacement Bridge over Patuxent River**

The current CIP project scope remains unchanged from last year's CIP, but the previously programmed \$50,000 in planning funding in Year 6 has been moved to "Beyond 6 Years". While the project description explicitly states that the project does not include the replacement of the existing bridge over the Patuxent River at the County line, the scope should be redefined to include examination of the existing bridge, which sorely needs to be replaced with a wider span to provide improved safety, especially for emergency vehicles.

**TRANSIT**

The City generally favors fare increases and other revenue increases as an alternative to reductions in transit service. The City took this position in the last round of WMATA budget hearings and continues to hold this position. According to the 2000 Census, approximately 6% of Bowie's population of over 50,000 residents used public transit for their daily commute to work. As of the latest results from the American Community Survey, approximately 10% of the City's 58,000 residents are now using public transit to get to work. The increasing dependency of our residents on the transit system to provide access to employment is a cause for great concern, in light of the reductions now under consideration by WMATA.

The City Council has long been interested in improved transit services to the Bowie area. The City Council has also been very interested in, and supportive of, the recommendations for transit and mixed-use activity centers in the 2006 Bowie and Vicinity Master Plan. Our City has grown tremendously over the last decade and now supports a town center, several million square feet of employment use and high-density multi-family development that did not exist in 1995 when the last Transit Service Operations Plan (TSOP) was approved. The City Council wholeheartedly supports all of the long-term recommendations for Bowie, and we note that the TSOP recommends specific changes to implement many of these items over the next several years. All of these steps are positive, and they work in the direction of bringing improved public transit service to our residents. Access to public transit is becoming even more critical as the price of gasoline continues to rise. The City Council asks for your continued commitment to expanding and restructuring the transit services planned for north central Prince George's County in the TSOP and honoring the timetable established by the Plan for providing these services.

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**SUMMARY**

In summary, we believe that it is critical to share information and concerns regarding those funding issues and projects which are important to our constituents. Yet at the same time we are cognizant of the challenges you face in deciding where to direct limited funds in these difficult economic times. We wish you the very best in your deliberations and thank you for consideration of our requests.

Sincerely,

Bowie City Council  
G. Frederick Robinson  
Mayor

April 19, 2010

The Honorable Thomas E. Dernoga, Chairman  
Prince George's County Council  
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive  
Upper Marlboro, Maryland 20772

Dear Chairman Dernoga:

The Bowie City Council appreciates the opportunity to provide comments pertaining to the upcoming FY 2011 Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission Budget.

### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM**

#### **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROJECTS – EXISTING FACILITIES**

**Enfield Chase Neighborhood Park** - Thirty additional parking spaces shall be added to the existing twenty eight spaces in the coming year. To date, \$150,000 has been spent with a completion date of December 2010. The Bowie City Council appreciates this work being completed at this popular park location.

**Foxhill Community Park** - The current year included funds for restroom, a parking expansion and pathways in the amount of \$700,000. This project has a completion date of December 2012. Continued improvements in this heavily used park are appreciated.

**Heather Hills Neighborhood Park/School** - The community and school have requested a 10-foot wide, 1,240-foot long trail around athletic fields. This project had an additional \$100,000 added in FY10 for a project total of \$200,000 which is scheduled for completion by August of 2011. The City of Bowie appreciates the acceleration of this valuable project.

**Saddlebrook East Community Park** - During FY 2007-2008, \$850,000 was spent to complete the work on these needed soccer fields. One of the two park identification signs is missing and the location of the second sign is difficult to see from the roadway. We request that the signage be replaced and located perpendicular to Race Track Road so it can be seen. We would also appreciate it if your maintenance division would improve the pavement surface in the access to the park which is riddled with potholes.

## **CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROJECTS**

**Green Branch Athletic Complex** - This \$8.8 million dollar project is currently under construction with an estimated completion date of December 2010. No additional funding is shown in the FY 2011-2016 period. The City of Bowie appreciates the commitment made by the Commission on this important new facility. The City reiterates its comments in past years that this location should be considered for lighting and irrigation.

**Fairwood, Fairwood East and Collington Community Parks** - Active recreation facilities at these parks will serve current and future residents of the Church Road community. As these large subdivisions are now under construction, the Commission should consider programming funding so that the park facilities will come on line as the new homes are occupied. We appreciate the acceleration of these much-needed projects that will provide some relief to City ball fields and recreation facilities.

**Sandy Hill Neighborhood Parks/Sandy Hill Special Area** - Funding on this project includes \$230,000 moved up from Year 2 to Year 1 for a softball field with football/soccer overlay and 52 parking spaces, the construction of 2 soccer fields and associated lighting. The final estimated completion date is December 2011, with a final expenditure of \$600,000. The City of Bowie appreciates the acceleration of this overdue project.

## **HIKER-BIKER TRAILS**

The City is anxious to work in partnership with The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) on several trail initiatives:

**Collington Branch Stream Valley Trail/Hall Road** - The City Council greatly appreciates the inclusion of \$100,000 in funding for a trail segment planned on the north side of Hall Road on the Commission's Collington Branch Stream Valley Park property, connecting Pointer Ridge Drive to the Hall Road crossing of the CSX Railroad tracks. This important off-road pedestrian facility will improve the accessibility and use of M-NCPPC land and will help to provide safer pedestrian access to the future South Bowie Library. The proposed City of Bowie budget for FY 2011 includes matching funds to be used in the Maryland State Highway Administration's sidewalk retrofit program to extend a sidewalk 500 feet from the CSX railroad tracks to Ashleigh Station Court. To complement this project, we ask for funding for the Collington Branch/Hall Road trail segment to be moved up from Year 2 in the proposed CIP to Year 1.

**Former A-44 Right-of-Way Trail** - It is again recommended that the M-NCPPC budget funds for a greenway and hiker-biker trail along the dedicated portions of the former A-44 right-of-way, between Church Road and the CSX railroad track. Acquisition of some remaining A-44 parcels by the Commission will also protect numerous Green Infrastructure assets. Construction of this major trail spine will link various neighborhoods and provide an off-road pedestrian and bicycle alternative to traveling on Church Road. In conjunction with this project, the City recommends the Commission fund a pedestrian bridge over MD 214 (Central Avenue). MD 214 is classified as an expressway on the Bowie Master Plan and, with vehicles that speed in excess of 55 miles per hour, the road presents a dangerous and very formidable barrier

for pedestrians. Establishment of a pedestrian bridge along the former A-44 right-of-way at MD 214 will fit into long-range plans to connect the Collington Branch trail system in the Bowie area to the Upper Marlboro planning area.

**The Bowie Heritage Trail - Old Town Bowie** - In 2008, the City amended its Trails Master Plan to endorse a new trail system serving Old Town Bowie. This system is now known as The Bowie Heritage Trail. The 2005 Bowie and Vicinity Master Plan, as well as the recently completed Preliminary Bowie State/MARC Station Sector Plan, recommend off-road pedestrian trail connections between Old Town Bowie and the MARC train station at Bowie State University. Such connections will improve pedestrian circulation and safety in Old Town Bowie and provide accessibility to the MARC commuter rail train station. The City's planned trail system will address these needs and, in addition, will provide access to the large, mixed-use development proposed near the university, which is the focal point of the Preliminary Sector Plan. The Bowie Heritage Trail system also has the potential to tie into the Patuxent River trail network now being developed by M-NCPPC that will connect the WB & A Trail to the MARC station. A County-funded CIP project that is complementary to the Bowie Heritage Trail system is requested. Specific funding in 2011 is requested to construct a trail on M-NCPPC property between the City's Jericho Park and the 150-unit Adnell subdivision, north of Old Town Bowie, and a trail connecting from the end of Normal School Road, under MD 197, to the MARC platform on the south side of the railroad line. These are key links that will jump start the Bowie Heritage Trail system.

**WB & A Bridge and Chestnut Avenue Trail** - The City again requests funding for an off road trail connecting the WB&A Trail to Old Town Bowie via Chestnut Avenue. The current road is substandard and does not allow for safe pedestrian or bicycle access. This trail connection will also improve access to High Bridge Elementary School. In addition, we believe a new pedestrian bridge should be funded across the Patuxent River to enhance the regional trail network.

Thank you for the opportunity to give our perspective on these projects. We look forward to working with the Commission on projects of mutual interest in the Bowie community.

Sincerely,

Bowie City Council  
G. Frederick Robinson  
Mayor

cc: Hon. Samuel J. Parker, Chairman,  
Prince George's County Planning Board