

Council President William K. Boniface
2011 Legislative Address
February 1, 2011

On behalf of my colleagues I'd like to begin this evening with a sincere thank you. Since Harford County established a charter form of government some 38 years ago, no election has ever returned an entire Council to office, until now. We deeply appreciate the confidence that you have placed in our ability to carry out the responsibilities of the offices we have been elected to serve. It is our intention to continue working together as we did during our first term to meet the many challenges that lay ahead.

Two major issues will dominate the Council's agenda for the upcoming year. First and foremost, the struggling economy, and secondly, but of no less importance, preparing for the update of the County's Master Plan.

County government is not immune to the same pain that many businesses and families are dealing with during what could arguably be called the worst economic period this generation has yet endured. The County Executive and his administration have a difficult task before them in preparing the budget for the next fiscal year. Revenue projections are ever changing and unexpected expenditures are always a concern, even after presenting the proposal to the Council in April. As the County has grown, the complexity of the budget has significantly increased also. There must be a discussion of priorities between the Executive and Council long before the legislative time clock begins. While this process may not lend itself to a confrontational relationship between the two branches of government that sells newspapers and makes for good reality television, it does lead to better results for the people we represent.

2011 will also include the process of updating the county's master plan. This important document establishes future goals and objectives for

the county that ultimately becomes the foundation for all supporting element plans and policies. It guides just about every action this Council and Executive takes each and every day. The Department of Planning and Zoning will be hard at work throughout the year involving the community in preparing a final plan to bring before the Council for consideration in 2012. Again, in order for a successful outcome, the Council must be involved long before introduction. As we did with both the zoning code rewrite process and comprehensive rezoning, the department will be providing the Council with updates during the year and in turn we will be providing them with input on the concerns that we feel need to be addressed. Hopefully this course of action brings about a better proposal for review in the end.

Another issue currently before Council is the establishment of the Office of the County Auditor in accordance with Section 213 of the County Charter. Harford is one of the few jurisdictions in the State without this function and is long overdue. While the County Auditor will serve at the pleasure of the Council, we are currently working with the Administration in developing responsibilities and procedures for this office so that it may operate as an asset to both the Legislative and Executive branches. Some may see this as growing government. We see it as putting in place an independent voice with the expertise to provide better oversight of those agencies receiving county funding which ultimately ensures that your tax dollars are being spent efficiently.

There you have it...the year ahead. Of course there will be other legislation to consider and decisions to be made along the way. The Council encourages you to get involved in the issues that come before us. Recently I heard a friend describe leadership as "building relationships". A simple definition but sums it up best. In order for us to lead, we need you the community to join with us. Together we can keep moving Harford on the right track. God bless.