

*Delegates called for traffic study and Councilman gathered workgroup months prior to fatality on Eastern Avenue*

**January 9, 2024 - (Middle River, MD)** Delegates Nawrocki and Szeliga, Senator Jennings, and Councilman Marks were beyond dismayed to hear news of the death of TSgt Lacy O'Neill last week. O'Neill suffered injuries from a horrific car accident on Eastern Avenue at the corner of Mariners Point Drive just southbound of Alice's Restaurant and north of Bengie's Drive-In Theater. O'Neill served in the 175th Security Forces Squadron of the Maryland Air National Guard at Martin State Airport. The elected officials wish to offer their condolences to O'Neill's parents and her fiancée among the many family, friends, and fellow servicemen and women who have been impacted by this tragedy.

Baltimore County's elected officials have been working to address the safety and appearance of Eastern Avenue in Middle River--an effort made even more important with recent crashes along the stretch from Carroll Island Road to White Marsh Boulevard.

In September, at the request of Delegates Ryan Nawrocki and Kathy Szeliga, the Maryland State Highway Administration completed a review of the intersection at Bengies Road and Eastern Boulevard. During the review of the traffic signal, SHA found that the traffic signal detector at Bengies Road was faulty. It has since been repaired. Also, the signal timing was adjusted at Eastern Boulevard and Bengies Road to give more time to left-turning vehicles from Eastern Boulevard to Bengies Road north. Then, on September 19th, the Delegates sent a follow-up letter to SHA requesting that an additional investigation be undertaken further north on Eastern Avenue from the intersection at MD-43 to Carroll Island Road. In their September letter, the Delegates shared, "We recently visited Alice's Restaurant, 2909 Eastern Boulevard, and the owner shared with us that her business sign has been struck by a vehicle twice in the past twelve months. She is very concerned about the speed and dangerous driving in that corridor."

This week, Delegates Nawrocki and Szeliga told SHA about the recent tragic fatality and discussed the impending traffic report that should be finalized shortly.

"We have asked the Maryland State Highway Administration to review the safety of this corridor again and to hold a community meeting to hear concerns from the public," Delegate Nawrocki said.

"Safety must be our top priority," added Delegate Szeliga. "We are listening to the community."

"We are all committed to a safer Eastern Avenue for everyone," added Senator Jennings.

In November, Councilman David Marks initiated the largest review of land in eastern Baltimore County to preserve open space and determine whether new development is compatible with existing communities. Several issues are located along Eastern Avenue, including a 17-acre undeveloped parcel at Stevens Road.

"Our office is looking to apply the Neighborhood Commons zoning to more than 3,000 acres of land to preserve it as open space, and to possibly lower the development intensity on another 2,000 acres," Councilman Marks commented. "Less development on Eastern Avenue will lead to less traffic."

Finally, the legislators are all represented on a task force that is examining the overall safety and appearance of Eastern Avenue. The eleven-member group will begin meeting in January.