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PG County Memorial Library System CEO Kathleen Teaze Announces Retirement

By PRESS OFFICER
PGCMLS

LARGO, MD—Kathleen Teaze, CEO of Prince George's County Memorial Library System (PGCMLS), announced her retirement effective Aug. 1, 2017.

"This has been a difficult decision, but after 32 years in the library profession, seven of which have been with the Prince George's County Memorial Library System, I believe that this is a good time to move to the next stage of my life. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to move our library system to such an exciting place in Maryland's public library landscape," Teaze said.



PHOTO COURTESY PGCMLS
CEO Kathleen Teaze

Among her accomplishments, Teaze increased the library system's technology and

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Maryland Businesses Warned Not to Fall for New 'Police' Phone Scam

By LUKE BODYCOMBE
MGBPR

WALES, UK—Businesses in Maryland are being warned of a new telephone scam, which is currently targeting offices throughout the US.

CPR Call Blocker, makers of the bestselling call blocking device in the USA, is urging businesses in Maryland to hang up if someone claiming to be a local police officer phones encouraging you to make a donation to a commu-

nity cause you have allegedly supported in the past.

The scam involves a business receiving a call from a person (usually a male) claiming to be a local police officer. He begins by asking for a company director by name and then asks a series of questions about whether or not there have been any problems with anti-social behaviour in the area lately. This is a tactic to build a rapport with whoever answers

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Maryland Could Host the Nation's Largest Offshore Wind Farm

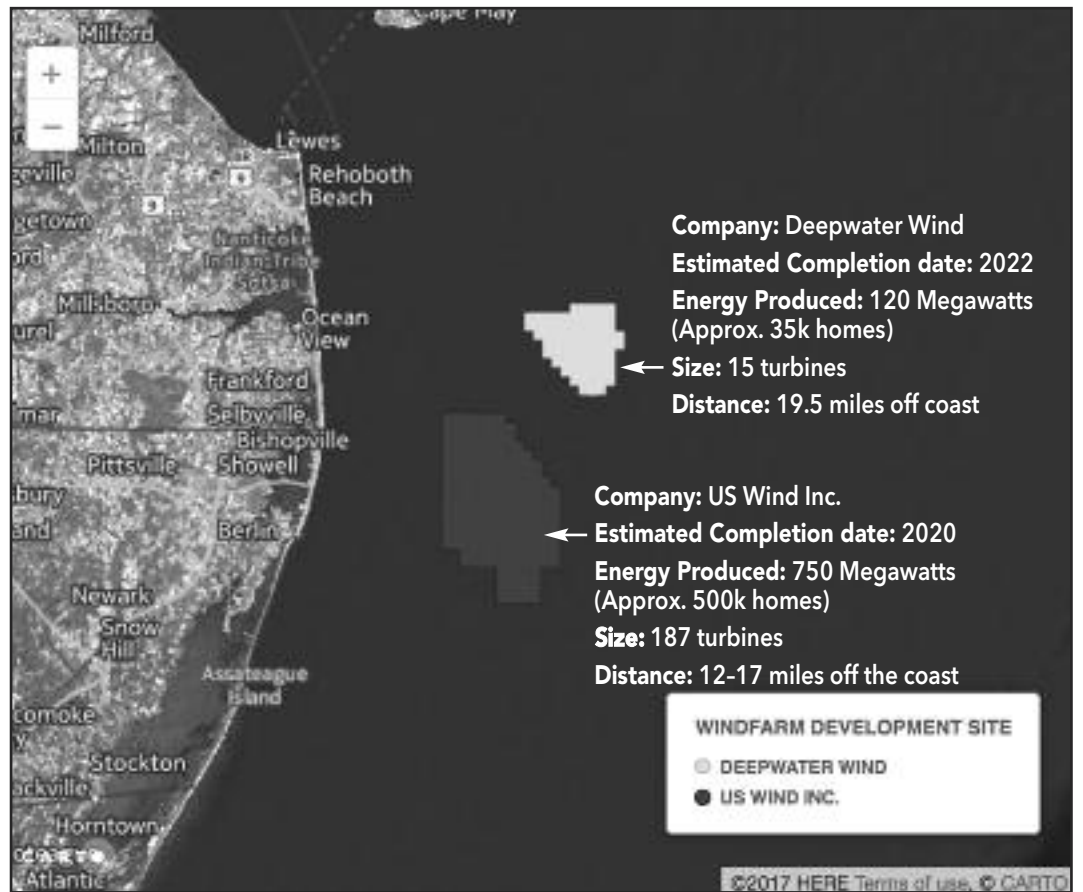
By CARA NEWCOMER
Capital News Service

ANNAPOLIS, MD—The Maryland Public Service Commission is considering two proposals for offshore turbines off the coast of Ocean City, giving Maryland the potential to host the nation's largest offshore wind farm.

The companies—US Wind and Deepwater Wind—plan to build turbines off the coast, using wind to generate clean energy. The turbines are connected to transmission lines that travel underground, carrying the energy to substations to be stored, distributed and used.

The approval of just one farm would put Maryland on the map with the largest, but the commission could potentially approve both proposals as long as both projects would not exceed an established price and fee increase for ratepayers, according to the Maryland Public Service Commission's Communications Director Tori Leonard.

Maryland is required to produce a certain amount of renewable energy through its renewable energy portfolio standard. If Maryland is not able to produce that amount within the state, they can purchase energy credits known as ORECs from out-of-state vendors, and vice versa. An OREC, or Offshore Wind Renewable Energy Credit, is a way of bundling and selling the clean electricity produced by wind farms.



Maryland officials consider wind farms within 20 miles of coast.

Maryland's current standard has a specific carve-out for offshore wind energy of up to 2.5 percent per year. Until an offshore wind project is approved and running, the 2.5 percent of renewable energy is being fulfilled by other fuels, like solar or geothermal energy.

The cost of the credits is capped, so a residential ratepayer would not pay more than \$1.50 per month more, and

a non-residential rate payer, like a small business owner, would not pay more than 1.5 percent more per month.

"For less than a cup of coffee (per month for homeowners), we can produce cleaner energy," said Liz Burdock, executive director of the Business Network for Offshore Wind, calling the decision a no-brainer.

If the commission approves both projects, the estimated

non-residential rate would increase per bill by 1.39 percent, with US Wind's totaling 0.96 percent and Deepwater Wind's totaling 0.43 percent. The estimated monthly residential rate would increase by \$1.44, with US Wind's being \$0.99 per month and \$0.45 per month, according to a March 21 report

See WIND FARM Page A3

EDC Partners With City of Greenbelt to Take Its Business Community to the Moon

By LORI C. VALENTINE
PGCEDC

GREENBELT, MD—On April 12, Prince George's County Economic Development Corporation (EDC) President and CEO Jim Coleman, along with his business development team sat down with City of Greenbelt Mayor Emmett Jordan and members of the City Council for an open discussion about the re-visioning of Greenbelt. This brainstorming strategy session also included more than 25 Greenbelt residents and business owners who are keenly interested in how they can work with the County to empower their beautiful community into a thriving business center.

"We are always happy to exchange powerful ideas on how to make every community in Prince George's County a thriving powerhouse of economic development," said Coleman. "The EDC has the resources to attract more businesses to Greenbelt and to provide a great workforce, and the City of Greenbelt has a storied



PHOTO COURTESY LORI C. VALENTINE
EDC President and CEO Jim Coleman (left) and EDC Executive Vice President Pradeep Ganguly addressing City of Greenbelt Mayor Emmett Jordan and members of City Council.

history that has helped change this country. We're your partners in taking Greenbelt to the next level, maintaining its integrity while, at the same time, thrusting its economy into the 21st century."

Greenbelt was founded as one of three 'green' towns in the New Deal Era, and is known widely as a public cooperative

community. It has a history of creating a high quality of life for its residents, many of whom have remained in Greenbelt for their entire lives. Currently, the City is looking to use its current resources to partner with County resources to help shape its future. Greenbelt Mayor Jordan is at the forefront of bringing this historic city into the future.

Marc 'Kap' Kapastin, General Counsel for Quantum Companies, the owners of Beltway Plaza Mall.

For more information on business development assistance or expansion, contact the EDC Executive Vice President Pradeep Ganguly by email at pganguly@co.pg.md.us, or call 301-583-4602.

"I want to thank the EDC for coming out to have this frank conversation with us," said Jordan. "I look forward to continuing the conversation and working together to enhance the economic footprint of Greenbelt and move it forward toward the greatness we already see."

Also in attendance at the meeting were EDC Executive Vice President Pradeep Ganguly, EDC Business Development Director John Mason, EDC Business Development Director Mayank Kapur and

Glen Arden Woods Elementary And Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle Schools Win Science Bowl Championships

By PRESS OFFICER
PGCPS

UPPER MARLBORO, MD—Glenarden Woods Elementary and Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School are this year's Science Bowl champions.



PHOTO COURTESY PGCPs
Glen Arden Elementary School winners

The Elementary School division started the season with 40 schools. Glenarden Woods edged out Robert Goddard Montessori in the final game to win its sixth county championship with a score of 235 to 200. Glenarden Woods is now tied with University Park for the

most elementary championships in Science Bowl history.

Sixteen schools competed in the Middle School division. King edged out rival Hyattsville, 255 to 240, to land its fourth county title. King now trails only Hyattsville and Kenmoor—with

seven and nine championships, respectively—for the most in county history.

Ashley Gonzales-Garcia, Hannah Abraham, Justin Kassembe, Ruby Colandrea

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In a Victory For Voting Rights, Texas I.D. Law Struck Down a Fifth Time

The determination raises the possibility that Texas voting procedures could be placed under federal supervision, as it was from the 1965 passage of the Voting Rights Act until the Supreme Court's disastrous 2013 gutting of the Act with its *Shelby v. Holder* decision.

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IRS: Private Collection of Some Overdue Federal Taxes Starts in April; Those Affected Will Hear First From IRS

The new program, authorized under a federal law enacted by Congress in December 2015, enables these designated contractors to collect, on the government's behalf, unpaid tax debts.

Business, Page A5

Movie Review:

Beauty and the Beast (2017)

They sing and dance, but they only bend and stretch in natural ways. And so the film has this manufactured, weighed-down feeling to it, a magical story hampered by gravity and reality: it turns out talking candlesticks aren't as wonderful without that rubbery, cartoonish energy.

Out on the Town, Page A6

Earth Talk

Dear EarthTalk:

Even though pesticides may take an environmental toll, isn't it worth it given how many more mouths we can feed thanks to their use?

—Mickey Jurowski, Palatine, IL

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COMMUNITY

Practical Money Skills

By Nathaniel Sillin

Make Sure Your Property's Assessed Value is Correct

Some homeowners can't wait to see the assessed value of their home drop. In fact, they'll tell you the bigger the drop, the better. Why? Your property taxes depend on your tax rate and your property's current market value, which is determined by a local assessor. You can't dispute the tax rate, but you may be able to show why the assessed value is too high.



An appeal that results in a lower value could save you money for years to come.

Find out when you can file an appeal. Start the process by determining when you can appeal your home's value assessment. You may be able to find the deadline on your local assessor's website, which might also have instructions on how to file an appeal.

Some areas have a several-month window each year for appeals, often following the annual mailing of assessment value notices. In addition, you might be able to dispute your property's assessment following a renovation or if you just bought the home.

Check your current assessment for errors. Every year, you should receive an official letter stating the assessed value of your home. If you think your property value is lower than the stated value, start collecting proof to demonstrate your reasoning.

One of the first things to look for is a mistake on your property's description, which may be on the letter you received or on your property card—available at the assessor's office or online.

It's not unheard of for a property card to list an extra bathroom or incorrect square footage. Assessors aren't always able to look inside a home during an inspection, and they might not know about renovations to a home.

Make a note of errors and try to estimate the value of each. You'll be able to use these as a basis for your appeal.

Gather more evidence. To strengthen your appeal, you may want to find additional evidence.

- **Make a list of comparable properties.** Try to get a list of four to six similar properties in your area and their market value. You could use real estate websites that list recent or estimated sales prices, ask your neighbors or look through public databases to find official assessed values. If you find the homes' sales prices or assessed values are lower than yours, or similar but your home is in worse condition, you may have a strong argument.
- **Estimate the cost of repairs.** A leaky roof, cracked driveway or another issue could lower your property's value. Make a list of the faults, estimate cost for repairs and take pictures as proof.
- **Make a note of changes in your neighborhood.** A property's value depends on more than just the home. If nearby houses were recently foreclosed on or the schools' rankings dropped, your property could be worth less than it was before.
- **Get a professional assessment.** You could hire a state-certified appraiser to estimate your property's current value. However, the assessment might cost \$300 to \$500, and this might only be a good idea if your research already looks fruitful. In some areas, you may need an official assessment to file an appeal.

Once you organize your evidence, it's time to file an appeal.

Present your findings. The appeal process varies depending on where you live. If you have a simple scenario, such as a mistake on your property card, you might be able to make your appeal over the phone. But some counties require you to submit the appeal online or by mail, or you may have to schedule an in-person review at the assessor's office.

It could take several weeks to months to hear back. If the decision doesn't come back in your favor, you could file another appeal with an independent review board.

Bottom line: After gathering evidence, you can make a showing for why your home's assessed value is too high and potentially lower your property taxes. But think twice if you're considering selling your home soon. A lower assessed value might affect how much someone is willing to pay for the home.

Speed Cameras Intended to Save Lives Near the University of Maryland Campus Providing Windfall to Private Camera Vendor

Vendor Makes Millions As Tickets Jump 202% With Speed Cameras Operating 24/7

By PRESS OFFICER
AAA Mid-Atlantic

WASHINGTON, D. C.—Not a single pedestrian perished on Baltimore Avenue (U.S. Route 1) near the campus of the University of Maryland (UMD) in the two-year period since the City of College Park began operating speed cameras 24 hours a day within a half-mile radius of college grounds and buildings. This good news is tempered by the fact that the vendor for the city's speed camera program, Optotraffic, garnered \$2.8 million in profits, as the sheer number of speed camera tickets escalated substantially during the same period, notes AAA Mid-Atlantic. Potentially, such contracts with phototicketing companies could create the patina of a conflict of interest, which is why Maryland lawmakers outlawed them in the wake of complaints from motorists, AAA Mid-Atlantic, good government groups, and public watchdog organizations.

Although few drivers in College Park realize it, every time a \$40 speed camera ticket is paid to the city, the for-profit company earns 39 percent of the fine proceeds. While College Park's speed cameras were intended to safeguard the lives and limbs of pedestrians and 38,000 enrolled students, the units have proven to be a hefty money maker for the city and its speed camera vendor, who have seen ticket revenue jump from \$1.5 million in FY 2014 to nearly \$4 million in FY 2015, before dropping to \$3.3 million in FY16. College Park issued 115,388 photo radar tickets, a 202% increase, in

	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Speed Camera Tickets	38,243	115,388	45,242
Gross Ticket Revenue	\$1,529,721	\$3,972,115	\$3,305,500
Payments To Vendor	\$596,591	\$1,549,125	\$1,289,164
State Reimbursement	\$0	\$418,050	\$0
Net Revenue Total	\$933,130	\$2,004,940	\$2,016,386

GRAPHIC COURTESY AAA MID-ATLANTIC

FY15, the first year of the 24/7 operation. Last year the city issued only 45,242 speed camera citations, 70,000 fewer, comprising a 60.7% nosedive. The vendor still got \$15.60 a pop.

To mollify the outrage of motorists over the fine print in such contracts, the Maryland General Assembly passed the Speed Monitoring Systems Reform Act of 2014. It prohibits payments on a per-ticket basis. College Park must comply with this law by June 1, 2017. On behalf of the motoring public, AAA Mid-Atlantic supports hard limits that will force the city's hand and it believes vendors should not be paid a per-ticket fee or a percentage of the total revenue produced by any automated speed enforcement camera program.

"In the aftermath of the unthinkable tragedies involving pedestrians, state, county, and local officials launched an array of safety initiatives and traffic enforcement measures, resulting in a remarkable drop in pedestrian crashes along U.S. Route 1. The speed cameras are saving lives and modifying unsafe speeding behaviors," said John B. Townsend II, AAA Mid-Atlantic's Manager of Public and Government Affairs. "Yet the profit margin soared for the speed

camera vendor and end-user manufacturer. Contracts should be structured so that the local agency pays a set fee to lease or purchase the equipment, plus a reasonable fee to the vendor."

Two years ago, the City of College Park and state highway officials launched an aggressive multi-pronged effort to end the deadly scourge of pedestrian fatalities and serious injuries on Route 1 in 2014. That was not the case just two years earlier when this stretch of highway with a checkered past was the scene of three pedestrian deaths. To curtail a rash of serious pedestrian crashes, the College Park City Council voted to expand the operating hours of the city's speed camera program to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year (or 24/7/365) within a half mile of the flagship university and on its main drag, noted for its heavy foot traffic, and its hangouts and haunts featuring beer towers and bottomless mimosas for the college crowd. Some motorists, however, fear the city's speed camera contract creates a "bounty system."

Since then, the roadway that bisects the campus has witnessed zero pedestrian deaths, as was the case in both 2015 and 2016. To deter illegal speeding in Col-

lege Park, the city issued nearly 200,000 speed camera citations since the mobilization of the all day and all night speed enforcement protocol. Previously, the speed cameras operated Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Few people would likely begrudge the safety results of the 24-7 speed camera regimen and an all-hands-on-deck approach, and the safety improvements undertaken by the Maryland State Highway Administration, the City of College Park Council and Police Department, the University of Maryland and the Prince George's County Police Department. By state law, speed cameras near elementary schools in College Park still operate from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., Monday-Friday.

Fiscally, perhaps no one has benefited more from the ramped up enforcement hours and higher ticket output in College Park than Optotraffic, the private sector vendor for the city's speed camera program. It is axiomatic, the more tickets the City of College Park issues, the more profits its private speed camera vendor makes under the per-ticket revenue formulas. Contractually, the

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Wind Farm from A1

from Levitan and Associates, a contractor that provides documents and analysis on the offshore wind projects.

Former Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley, a Democrat, signed into law the Offshore Wind Act of 2013. This law set the parameters for wind farms in Maryland, clarifying where they could be located, requiring the commission's approval, and authorizing the state to provide and purchase energy credits from these wind farms.

The Democrat-controlled legislature overrode Republican Gov. Larry Hogan's veto of the 2016 Clean Energy Jobs Act during the 2017 General Assembly session. Under the law, which the governor argued passed along too many additional costs to ratepayers, the state's requirement for renewable-energy sourced electricity increased

from 20 percent by the year 2022 to 25 percent by the year 2020.

Those who support Maryland offshore wind believe the farms will produce clean air, bring jobs to the state, and put Maryland on the map for clean energy.

Opponents are concerned about the costs, and how the visual impact of the turbines would affect tourism and the possible negative affect it could have on the community.

Delegate Robbyn Lewis, D-Baltimore, told the University of Maryland's Capital News Service she believes a wind farm could help Maryland reach its renewable energy goal. "Given the fact that the state of Maryland has made commitments to expand renewable energy, this is a perfect time to do it," Lewis said.

Lewis said while she does not have any comment on which proposal she prefers, it would be a disappointment if the commission did not approve either project.

"I hope the Public Service Commission decides to go forward with this," Lewis said earlier this month. "I look forward to the possibility of creating more jobs, reducing our dependence on fossil fuels and having clean air."

On Nov. 22, the Public Service Commission announced it was considering the two offshore wind farm proposals, one by US Wind Inc., a subsidiary of Toto Holding SpA, and the other by Skipjack Offshore Energy LLC, a subsidiary of Deepwater Wind Holdings, LLC.

The US Wind project occupies a Maryland leasing area, while the Deepwater Wind farm is projected to be built in a Delaware leasing area. Both projects will bring clean energy to Maryland.

Clint Plummer, vice president of development for Deepwater Wind, said he believes his company's project would benefit Maryland in a manageable way,

with a strategy to develop the project in different phases.

"We're the most experienced developer and we've proposed a smaller project with an aggressive price," Plummer said, comparing his company's proposal to the competing US Wind project.

Deepwater Wind's Skipjack project would consist of 15 wind turbines about 19.5 miles off the coast, Plummer said. "It will be a 120 megawatt project, which is enough to power about 35,000 houses in the state of Maryland," Plummer said.

The Skipjack project is planned to be built 26 miles away from the Ocean City Pier, according to Plummer, minimizing visualization. It is expected to be completed by 2022, according to the company's website.

The US Wind farm proposal includes 187 turbines, which

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Champions from A1

and Afrah Siddiqui represented Glenarden Woods. Teachers Ariel Dela-Cerna, Jared Hojnoski and Ryan Richardson sponsored the team.

The King team, sponsored by teacher Elizabeth Butler, included Michael Stroud, Joseph Bailor, Joshua Webb, Rahel Mani and Keven Guruswamy.

Now in its 31st year, *Science Bowl* is Prince George's County Public Schools' award-winning

science quiz program, hosted by Dave Zahren, Senior Television Specialist. More than 7,500 students have participated over the decades.

Competitions are taped live at the Bonnie F. Johns Educational Media Center in Landover. *Science Bowl* has won numerous awards for outstanding children's programming, including the Telly and CableAce. The show is aired on Channels 96 (Comcast) 38 (Verizon) and YouTube.



Martin Luther King, Jr. Middle School winners

PHOTO COURTESY PGCS

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COMMENTARY

Cong. Chris Van Hollen United States Senator for Maryland



Van Hollen Leads Maryland Delegation in Effort to Protect Vital NASA Missions

WASHINGTON, D.C.—Today U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen led every Democratic member of the Maryland Congressional Delegation in urging National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) to protect two missions vital to Maryland's leadership in earth and space science. In a letter to Acting Administrator Robert Lightfoot, the lawmakers warned that cutting or eliminating the Restore-L satellite servicing mission and the Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, and ocean Ecosystem (PACE) mission, as proposed in President Trump's budget, would have harmful impacts on Maryland jobs and our ability to understand and monitor critical environmental issues such as climate change.

In addition to Senator Van Hollen, the letter was signed by Senator Ben Cardin and Congressmen Steny Hoyer, Elijah Cummings, Dutch Ruppersberger, John Sarbanes, John Delaney, Anthony Brown, and Jamie Raskin.

"Both missions support between 400–800 high-skill, high-paying jobs that would be adversely affected by these changes—scientists and engineers who drive innovation and discovery, and contribute to their communities and the entire state of Maryland," the lawmakers wrote.

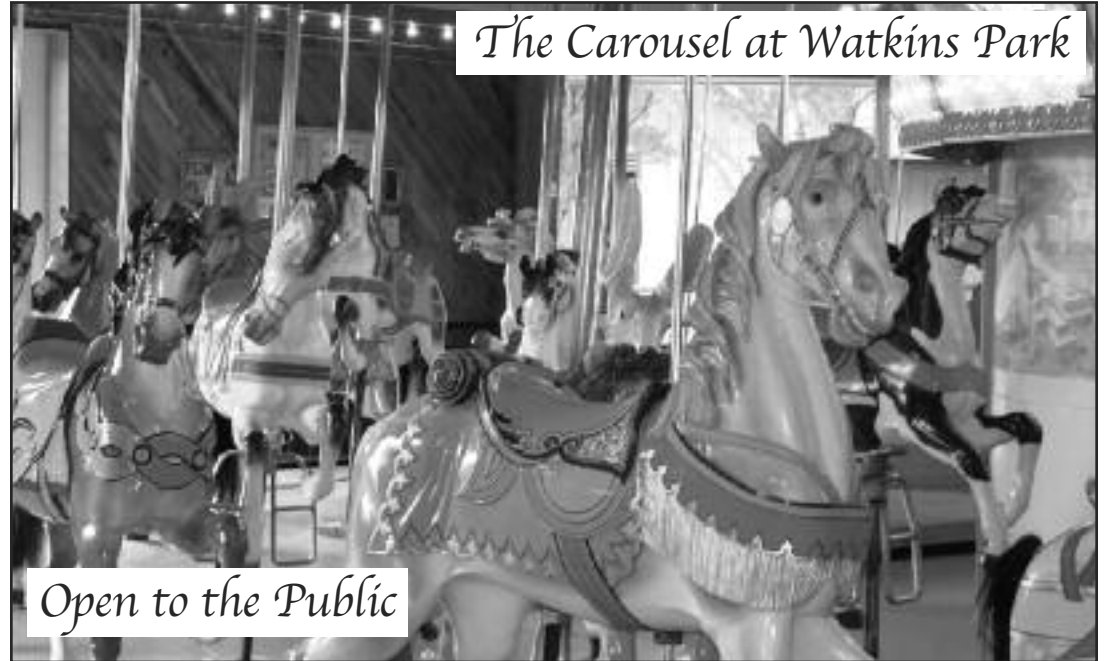
They continued, "We believe restructuring and consolidation of the Restore-L mission will lead to irreversible capability reductions. Eliminating the PACE mission would jeopardize NASA's ability to monitor some of our most critical environmental issues, such as harmful algal bloom and atmospheric quality predictions, and respond appropriately. As budget talks proceed, we ask that you vigorously support and advocate on behalf of the Restore-L and PACE programs to keep NASA on the cutting edge of technology and exploration."

The full text of the letter follows:
Dear Administrator Lightfoot:

We write to express our grave concerns with proposed funding reductions to NASA's Restore-L satellite servicing mission and the proposed elimination of the Plankton, Aerosol, Cloud, and ocean Ecosystem (PACE) mission. Both missions support between 400–800 high-skill, high-paying jobs that would be adversely affected by these changes—scientists and engineers who drive innovation and discovery, and contribute to their communities and the entire state of Maryland. NASA's robotic spacecraft servicing technologies and satellite observations are also critical to our understanding of Earth and exploration of our solar system. We urge you to advocate for the essential role that these programs play in the NASA mission.

Restore-L will help establish a technology test-bed for rendezvous, proximity operations, docking, inspection, refueling, and relocation of satellites—even for existing satellites not designed to be serviced on-orbit. These cost-saving capabilities could lengthen the lifespan of satellites, providing new methods for operators to manage their satellites more effectively. Such demonstrations and operations are also fundamental to future NASA platforms and missions, including human exploration of Mars, the Moon, and asteroids. NASA, particularly the Goddard Spaceflight Center (GSFC), located in Greenbelt, Maryland, has extensive experience operating in satellite servicing, and Restore-L will continue that work.

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ANTIQUE CHESAPEAKE CAROUSEL AND MINIATURE TRAIN
Watkins Regional Park features an authentic, hand-carved, hand-painted, 80-year-old carousel which has a rare combination of 45 animals including a kangaroo, jackass, goat, and seahorse. Do not miss the train as it passes through the lovely, wooded surroundings nearby. The park is located at 301 Watkins Park Drive, Upper Marlboro, MD. The carousel and train are open Memorial Day–Labor Day, Tues.–Sun., 10 a.m.–7 p.m. For more information call 301-218-6761.

PHOTO BY LEGUSTA FLOYD, JR.

Child Watch

by Marion Wright Edelman



The 5th National GrandRally: Building a Community of Hope

When the contestants on *Dancing With the Stars* recently performed routines representing the most memorable year of their lives, Olympic gold medal-winning gymnast Simone Biles brought down the house dancing to the worship song "Good Good Father" to celebrate the year her grandparents became her Mom and Dad. During last summer's Olympics many viewers became familiar with her story and her proud parents Ron and Nellie Biles, who adopted Simone and her sister from foster care when Simone was six. Before her dance Simone said, "Growing up, my biological mom was suffering from drug and alcohol abuse and she was in and out of jail. I never had mom to run to. I do remember always being hungry and afraid... My parents saved me. They've set huge examples of how to treat other people and they've been there to support me since day one. There's nothing I can say to them to thank them enough."

The Biles family has helped shine a spotlight on the importance of loving families. "Kinship care families" or "grand-families" as they are sometimes called are relatives raising their grandchildren or other kin when their parents cannot due to death, military service, or challenges like opioid or other substance abuse, mental health problems or domestic violence. Some children are removed from their parents' care by the state and placed with relatives in foster care. In other cases, children are placed informally with relatives outside of formal foster care. Relative care helps children maintain family and often community connections. There also is strong evidence that children placed with relatives experience greater stability, have fewer behavioral problems, and are just as safe as children in non-relative care. More than seven million children live in households headed by grandparents or other relatives, and nearly 2.6 million of them are being raised in kinship families without a parent present. They step forward to care for the children but sometimes require financial or other

help to appropriately meet the children's needs.

On Wednesday, May 10, hundreds of grandparent and relative caregivers will gather in Washington, D.C. for the 5th National GrandRally: Building a Community of Hope to celebrate their critical role in providing safe, loving and permanent families for children. They seek to educate Congress and the broader public about essential federal policies and programs that help them care for children and must be maintained and strengthened to support them more effectively while building a community of hope. The Children's Defense Fund is honored to be cosponsoring the GrandRally with Generations United, AARP, Casey Family Programs, FosterClub, GrandFamilies of America, and the National Kinship Alliance for Children and more than 20 additional partners.

The GrandRally will take place on the front law of the U.S. Capitol and feature Members of Congress, grandparent and other relative caregivers, children in kinship families, and others. A Second Chance Inc. Choir from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, which includes many kinship caregivers, will return to offer thanks and cel-

ebration for the grandparents and other relatives around the country. Michelle Singletary, who with her four siblings was raised by her grandmother she often calls "Big Mama" in her syndicated column "The Color of Money," will emcee the GrandRally. After the rally, caregivers will visit their Senators and Representatives to thank them and urge additional support to help children in their care thrive.

The GrandRally builds and strengthens a national network—a community of hope. For relative caregivers across the country this is an opportunity to meet others and know they are not alone. It inspires them to raise their powerful voices in Congress and back at home.

If you are a grandparent or relative caregiver or know someone who is I hope you and others from your community will join the GrandRally on May 10! I urge every faith community, service organization and others to reach out and honor grandparents and other relatives raising children by helping them attend the GrandRally. If you can't at-

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Marc Morial, President and CEO National Urban League



In a Victory For Voting Rights, Texas I.D. Law Struck Down a Fifth Time

"No right is more precious in a free country than that of having a voice in the election of those who make the laws under which, as good citizens, we must live. Other rights, even the most basic, are illusory if the right to vote is undermined."

—United States Supreme Court Justice Hugo Black

A federal court this week dealt a blow to Texas' efforts to disenfranchise voters of color.

Texas' draconian 2011 voter identification law has been struck down for the fifth time. Among the attorneys representing the plaintiffs, Texas State Conference of NAACP Branches and the Mexican American Legislative Caucus of the Texas House of Representatives, are the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, who worked tirelessly to defend our nations voting rights.

The United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas determined the law intentionally discriminates against Black and Latino voters. The determination raises the possibility that Texas voting procedures could be placed under federal supervision, as it was from the 1965 passage of the Voting Rights Act until the Supreme Court's disastrous 2013 gutting of the Act with its *Shelby v. Holder* decision.

The court found that when the Texas legislature considered the bill, the lawmakers were aware that only two people, out of 20 million votes cast in the previous decade, had been convicted of in-person voter fraud. Other, more common forms of voter fraud were not addressed by the bill. The law was easily the most restrictive in the nation with respect to permitted identification. A Texas state handgun license—which may be legally obtained by some non-U.S. citizens—is a permissible form of identification under the law, while a federal or state government ID, nor a student ID, are not.

Monday was the second time Judge Nelva Gonzales Ramos had ruled on the law. At the 2014 trial, experts testified to Texas' shameful history of sup-

pressing minority voters, from reconstruction up to the present day. Between 1895 and 1944, Texas permitted all-white primary elections. From 1905 to 1970, Texas voters were prohibited from taking people with them to the polls to assist them in reading and interpreting the ballot. Between 1902 and 1966, Texas required a poll tax.

And even though the Voting Rights Act of 1965 put Texas' voting procedures under federal preclearance, Texas continued discriminatory practices. When to voting age was lowered to 18 in 1971, Waller County—home to historically Black Prairie View A&M University—prohibited students from voting unless they or their families owned property in the county. A court struck down the requirement in 1979, but Waller County continued attempting to enforce the law as recently as 2003. Waller County violated the preclearance requirement during Barack Obama's 2008 campaign for President, improperly rejecting voter registrations and placing limits on the number of new registrations. The witnesses also noted that in every redistricting cycle since 1970, Texas has been found to have violated the Voting Rights Act with racially gerrymandered districts.

"Minorities continue to have to overcome fear and intimidation when they vote," Judge Ramos wrote in her 2014 decision. "Reverend Johnson testified that there are still Anglos at the polls who demand that minority voters identify themselves, telling them that if they have ever gone to jail, they will go to prison if they vote. Additionally, there are poll watchers who dress in law enforcement-style clothing for an intimidating effect."

While we join other civil rights groups in celebrating the court's decision, Texas persistence in continuing its long history of racial discrimination against voters is disheartening. We call on Texas' leadership to heed the blindingly clear message that voter suppression is unacceptable in 21st Century America, and move forward with a commitment to equality and opportunity.

The Prince George's Post

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BUSINESS

The American Counseling Association's Counseling Corner

Tips for Keeping Your Children Informed

Maybe it's a divorce, Dad losing his job, a seriously ill family member. Are these things that you want to share with your children?

Many parents try to protect their kids by holding back on bad news, trying not to share the emotional pain that life can bring.

Unfortunately, doing so often does the child a disservice. He or she may grow up with a faulty perception of marriage and family life, and a distorted picture of how the real world works.

Most children, even fairly young ones, are often more aware of problems than we realize. They overhear discussions and recognize when a parent is sad, upset or acting in unusual ways. They hear people talk or see things on TV that let them see how troubled the world can be.

When children get news in bits and pieces it can leave them with a poor understanding of what is happening. When children see Mommy and Daddy are unhappy, upset, angry or worried, they will often assume the worst and think it must be their fault.

Instead, children benefit when they are informed, in an age-appropriate manner, about what is happening. They don't need to know all the sordid details of relationship problems, bad work environments or the loss of a job, but they should have reliable information if what's happening is going to impact them. If information isn't shared, again the kids often assume the problem is their fault.

How much to share depends on the child. Most younger children don't need to know all the details, but it's important to let your child understand that he or she is included, that the problem isn't his or her fault, and that as parents, you are doing your best to handle the issue.

Share such information at a time when you and your children can sit down together and discuss what is happening without distractions. Allow a child to ask questions and to understand the situation on his or her level. You want to be truthful and reassuring.

Your school counselor, or a local professional counselor, can offer help about the best ways to share bad news with your children, as well as advice on behavior changes that such news might bring.

But whenever a family is facing troubling times, deciding how to communicate with your children should be one of your first—not last—priorities.

Counseling Corner is provided by the American Counseling Association. Comments and questions to ACAcorner@counseling.org or visit the ACA website at www.counseling.org

Phone Scam from A1

the phone and display a level of knowledge of the local area to make them appear genuine.

After lulling businesses in to a false sense of security with a seemingly sound knowledge of the area and the names of the company directors, the call then takes a sinister turn. The caller goes on to ask whether or not the business will be continuing to support a local police community publication with a small donation, just as they have done in the past. An apparent "colleague" of the caller then calls within ten minutes of the original call asking for payment. Yet when challenged to provide a telephone number so he can be called back, he claims to have forgotten his number.

Kris Hicks of CPR Call Blocker is urging businesses in Maryland to be wary of unsolicited calls asking for donations: "The issue with this type of scam is that people in businesses could easily be tricked in to thinking that they have supported a cause like this in the past. As many local businesses often give back to their communities through charitable donations, scams like these can be easy to fall for.

"The additional problem with calls like these is that people are naturally more inclined to trust a call that they receive from someone in a position of authority, such as a policeman.

However, the police will not ask for money over the phone.

"The use of official records, which are easily available, says it all and people should be warned that knowledge of these details is no guarantee that the caller is legitimate."

One of the best ways to protect your business is to purchase a call blocker device such as a CPR Call Blocker which simply plugs into any landline and features a 'Block Now' button which ends an unwanted call and permanently blocks the number. They come pre-programmed with up to 2,000 known nuisance callers and have the ability to store up to an additional 1,500 numbers.

Mr Hicks continued: "In the meantime, we would advise businesses in Maryland to be vigilant against these types of calls and suggest they never make a donation over the phone to an unsolicited caller without verifying the caller. This can be done by asking for their full name, job title and telephone number so you can check it out. We would also advise businesses to be aware of all the causes that they have supported in the past so that they cannot be fooled in to donating to fake causes."

CPR Call Blocker is the best selling and most trusted call blocker brand worldwide. The CPR suite of call blockers is available from www.cprcall-blocker.com and www.amazon.com

IRS: Private Collection of Some Overdue Federal Taxes Starts in April; Those Affected Will Hear First From IRS

IRS Will Handle Most Tax Debts; Taxpayers Advised to Watch Out for Scam Calls

By PRESS OFFICER
Office of the Comptroller

ANNAPOLIS, MD—Starting this month, the Internal Revenue Service will begin sending letters to a relatively small group of taxpayers whose overdue federal tax accounts are being assigned to one of four private-sector collection agencies.

The new program, authorized under a federal law enacted by Congress in December 2015, enables these designated contractors to collect, on the government's behalf, unpaid tax debts. Usually, these are unpaid individual tax obligations that are not currently being worked by IRS collection employees and often were assessed by the tax agency several years ago.

Taxpayers being assigned to a private firm would have had multiple contacts from the IRS in previous years and still have an unpaid tax bill.

"The IRS is taking steps throughout this effort to ensure that the private collection firms work responsibly and respect taxpayer rights," said IRS Commissioner John Koskinen. "The IRS also urges taxpayers to be on the lookout for scammers who might use this program as a cover to trick people. In reality, those taxpayers whose accounts are assigned as part of the private

collection effort know they have a tax debt."

The program will begin the first week in April with a few hundred taxpayers receiving mailings and subsequent phone calls, with the program growing to thousands a week later in the spring and summer. Taxpayers with overdue taxes will always receive multiple contacts, letters and phone calls, first from the IRS, not private debt collectors.

The IRS will always notify a taxpayer before transferring their account to a private collection agency (PCA). First, the IRS will send a letter to the taxpayer and their tax representative informing them that their account is being assigned to a PCA and giving the name and contact information for the PCA. This mailing will include a copy of Publication 4518, *What You Can Expect When the IRS Assigns Your Account to a Private Collection Agency*.

Only four private groups are participating in this program: CBE Group of Cedar Falls, Iowa; Conserve of Fairport, N.Y.; Performant of Livermore, Calif.; and Pioneer of Horseheads, N.Y. The taxpayer's account will only be assigned to one of these agencies, never to all four. No other private group is authorized to represent the IRS.

Once the IRS letter is sent, the designated private firm will send

its own letter to the taxpayer and their representative confirming the account transfer. To protect the taxpayer's privacy and security, both the IRS letter and the collection firm's letter will contain information that will help taxpayers identify the tax amount owed and assure taxpayers that future collection agency calls they may receive are legitimate.

The private collectors will be able to identify themselves as contractors of the IRS collecting taxes. Employees of these collection agencies must follow the provisions of the Fair Debt Collection Practices Act, and like IRS employees, must be courteous and must respect taxpayer rights.

The private firms are authorized to discuss payment options, including setting up payment agreements with taxpayers. But as with cases assigned to IRS employees, any tax payment must be made, either electronically or by check, to the IRS. A payment should never be sent to the private firm or anyone besides the IRS or the U.S. Treasury. Checks should only be made payable to the United States Treasury. To find out more about available payment options, visit IRS.gov/Payments.

Private firms are not authorized to take enforcement actions against taxpayers. Only IRS employees can take these actions,

such as filing a notice of Federal Tax Lien or issuing a levy. To learn more about the new private debt collection program, visit the Private Debt Collection page on IRS.gov.

The IRS reminds taxpayers to be on the lookout for scammers posing as private collection firms. The IRS will be watching for these schemes as the collection program begins, and this effort will include working with partners in the tax community and law enforcement about emerging scams.

People should remember that these private collection firms will only be calling about a tax debt the person has had—and has been aware of—for years and had been contacted about previously in the past by the IRS.

"Here's a simple rule to keep in mind. You won't get a call from a private collection firm unless you have unpaid tax debts going back several years and you've already heard from the IRS multiple times," Koskinen said. "The people included in the private collection program typically already know they have a tax issue. If you get a call from someone saying they're from one of these groups and you've paid your taxes, that's a sure sign of a scam."

For more information, visit the "Tax Scams and Consumer Alerts" page on IRS.gov.

EXTENSION—Prince George's County Local Development Council Extends Grant Applications Deadline to Monday, May 15, 2017

Non-Profit Organizations Serving MGM National Harbor Area are Encouraged to Apply

By PRESS OFFICER
PG County Government

UPPER MARLBORO, MD—On April 27, the Prince George's County Local Development Council (PGCLDC) announced that the deadline for the new grant program for non-profits that serve Prince George's County in the defined impact area around MGM National Harbor has been extended to Monday, May 15, 2017. The extension is designed to encourage more non-profits to apply for funding. These grants will enable organizations to expand community-based programs and services within the three mile radius around the new MGM National Harbor gaming facility. By working with non-profits, the PGCLDC hopes to positively impact residents and communities in the affected area.

Organizations that are interested in receiving funding must submit their application via mail or have it hand delivered

by the May 15th deadline. E-mail and facsimile applications will NOT be accepted and any application submitted after the deadline will be disqualified from competitive review.

The Local Development Council (LDC) was created by state law as a mechanism for ensuring that the public is engaged and has input into how the government minimizes the negative impact that a new gaming facility may have on the surrounding area. According to state law, each jurisdiction where a gaming license is in operation must establish a local development council. The Prince George's County Local Development Council also consults with the County on the following:

- The development of a multi-year plan for the expenditure of local impact grant funds
- The review of a master plan provided by the gaming licensee-for the development of the gaming site
- The development of a comprehensive transportation plan for the gaming facility.

WHAT:

Prince George's County Local Development Council Community Impact Grant Applications for the defined area surrounding the MGM National Harbor facility.

WHO CAN APPLY:

Non-Profits that serve the impact area within a 3 mile radius of MGM National Harbor in Prince George's County.

WHEN ARE APPLICATIONS DUE:

Close of Business (5:00 p.m.) on Monday, May 15, 2017

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION:

<http://www.princegeorgescountymd.gov/1125/Local-Development-Council>
Charice Young
County Administration Building, 5th Floor
14741 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
301-952-4264

Camera from A3

privatized vendor is paid on a per-ticket basis, meaning it receives nearly 40 percent of each speed camera ticket paid by a motorist. Similar contracts with speed camera vendors across Maryland ranged from as low as 27.9% per ticket to as high as 40.6 percent.

During the three-year period, the City of College Park gleaned \$4,954,456 in net speed camera revenue following its \$3.4 million in payments to Optotrafic. College Park also remitted \$418,050 to the Comptroller of Maryland because its speed camera revenue exceeded 10 percent of the total municipal budget or

general fund revenues during FY15, as duly mandated by the 2009 Maryland statewide speed camera law. Thirty-nine Maryland jurisdictions operate speed camera systems. Under its 2011 contract with its speed camera vendor, the city of Baltimore paid the contractor \$11.20 per (\$40) ticket. Montgomery County once paid its old speed camera contractor \$16.25 per (\$40) citation, but it now pays its new vendor a flat fee, as does Washington, D.C.

Curiously, if a motorist of a certain disposition fights the ticket in Maryland District Court on "speed camera day," the judge might reduce the fine and impose \$22.50 in court costs, meaning

the vendor doesn't get a cent. Advocates say College Park, and other smaller municipalities in Maryland, are simply outsourcing their speed camera enforcement programs to vendors responsible for operating the cameras and processing and mailing citations to drivers. Now, all the wiser to the pitfalls of the per-ticket fee system, more jurisdictions around the region and nation are ripping up old contracts as they expire and are entering flat-fee payment structures or fee-for-service contracts and arrangements. But not the City of College Park, at least not yet.

Critics contend the current contractual arrangement, once the privatized automated traffic

enforcement industry's best-kept secret, places the private sector vendor's bottom line and profits "above traffic safety." In respect to per-ticket revenue formulas, the Federal Highway Administration warns agencies, vendors "should not be paid on a per-ticket basis due to potential conflict of interest issues that may arise from this arrangement." Within two months, the City of College Park and its vendor, Optotrafic, will have to comply with Maryland's new Speed Monitoring Systems Reform Act of 2014, championed by AAA Mid-Atlantic and the Maryland Association of Counties. At long last, this will force the city to jettison its per-ticket contract.

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OUT ON THE TOWN

ERIC D. SNIDER'S
IN THE DARK

Movie Review

Beauty and the Beast (2017)

Beauty and the Beast (2017)
Grade: C
Rated PG
2 hrs., 9 min

The only way Disney's live-action remake of its own *Beauty and the Beast* works is if you don't compare it to the 1991 animated masterpiece. This is hard to do, though, because 1) you have seen the 1991 animated masterpiece, possibly many times, and 2) the remake keeps chasing it, going so far as to duplicate specific shots and sight gags in an effort to trigger fond memories. Those memories are indeed fond, but the new film pales in comparison to them. It never passes the "So why am I watching this version?" test.

It's only a remake of the 1991 cartoon, by the way, with those seven songs—"Be Our Guest," "Gaston," etc.—and none of the ones that were added when the film was turned into a Broadway musical. (It doesn't even use the "Human Again" sequence from the film's 2002 re-release.) Instead, it has a few uninspired new songs written by Alan Menken and Tim Rice just for the movie (and thus potential Best Song Academy Award consideration). Directed by Bill Condon (*Dreamgirls*) from a screenplay by Stephen Chbosky (*The Perks of Being a Wallflower*) and Disney stalwart Evan Spiliotopoulos (*Pooh's Heffalump Movie*), it's 129 minutes long and has about the same amount of singing as the 85-minute original did. You know what that means: more talking!

The plot is essentially unchanged save for minor variations and some expanded backstories. Belle (Emma Watson), the only headstrong, literate girl in her provincial French village, becomes prisoner to a buffalo-like Beast (Dan Stevens), actually a handsome prince who was cursed with beastliness as punishment for his selfishness. He dwells in an enchanted castle with his servants, who were transformed into housewares due to guilt by association, I guess. These include Lumiere the candelstick (Ewan McGregor), Cogsworth the clock (Ian McKellen), and Mrs. Potts the teapot (Emma Thompson), plus a narcoleptic, opera-singing wardrobe (Audra McDonald) and her harpsichord husband (Stanley Tucci). If the Beast doesn't get someone to fall in love with him before the last petal on the arbitrary magic rose arbitrarily falls, he and his employees (slaves?) will be stuck like this forever.



ROTTENTOMATOES

Disney's *Beauty and the Beast* is a live-action re-telling of the studio's animated classic which refashions the classic characters from the tale as old as time for a contemporary audience, staying true to the original music while updating the score with several new songs. *Beauty and the Beast* is the fantastic journey of Belle, a bright, beautiful and independent young woman who is taken prisoner by a beast in his castle. Despite her fears, she befriends the castle's enchanted staff and learns to look beyond the Beast's hideous exterior and realize the kind heart and soul of the true Prince within. The film stars: Emma Watson as Belle; Dan Stevens as the Beast; Luke Evans as Gaston, the handsome, but shallow villager who woos Belle; Oscar® winner Kevin Kline as Maurice, Belle's eccentric, but lovable father; Josh Gad as LeFou, Gaston's long-suffering aide-de-camp; Golden Globe® nominee Ewan McGregor as Lumiere, the candelabra; Oscar nominee Stanley Tucci as Maestro Cadenza, the harpsichord; Oscar nominee Ian McKellen as Cogsworth, the mantel clock; and two-time Academy Award® winner Emma Thompson as the teapot, Mrs. Potts. Directed by Oscar® winner Bill Condon based on the 1991 animated film, *Beauty and the Beast* is produced by Mandeville Films' David Hoberman and Todd Lieberman, with eight-time Oscar-winning composer Alan Menken, who won two Academy Awards® (Best Original Score and Best Song) for the 1991 animated film, providing the score, which will include new recordings of the original songs written by Menken and Howard Ashman, as well as several new songs written by Menken and three-time Oscar winner Tim Rice.

Meanwhile, an over-compensating violence enthusiast named Gaston (Luke Evans) wants to marry Belle whether she likes it or not (she does not). Assisted by his faithful, pear-shaped sidekick LeFou (Josh Gad)—whose romantic crush on Gaston is more obvious than before but still unspoken—Gaston uses Belle's dotty father, Maurice (Kevin Kline), as leverage. Maurice is a vaguely defined artist or tinkerer now instead of an inventor, and there's a lengthy tangent giving unnecessary details about his late wife, Belle's mother. On the other hand, new information about the Beast's pre-Beast life effectively fleshes out his role in the story, and it's good to finally have an explanation for, among other things, why the villagers never noticed the giant Beast castle a few miles away.

The enchanted objects, including much of the Beast, are mostly CGI creations—animated, in other words—but Condon and company chose to make everything adhere to the laws of

physics that would apply to real objects. They sing and dance, but they only bend and stretch in natural ways. And so the film has this manufactured, weighed-down feeling to it, a magical story hampered by gravity and reality: it turns out talking candelsticks aren't as wonderful without that rubbery, cartoonish energy. The songs often have repetitive, vamping measures added between lyrics to accommodate the blocking (not an issue in a cartoon, where characters can move from one side of the room to the other instantaneously). Some visual jokes fizzle for similar reasons. For example, when the Beast is encouraged to flash a smile, the result isn't a hilariously exaggerated grin but a mild one, confined by the limits of what a real Beast's mouth and teeth can do.

That being said, the cast is almost uniformly excellent. If there's any element of this remake that surpasses the original, it would be found among the performances. Emma Watson

and Dan Stevens have chemistry together even under the makeup and CGI, and it's nice to see (and hear a bit of singing from) Kevin Kline as crazy old Maurice. Luke Evans makes a fine preening Gaston, though Josh Gad's campy LeFou veers wildly between funny and irritating, saddled with anachronistic dialogue like "I used to be on Gaston's side, but we are so not in a good place right now." And if someone had to replace Angela Lansbury as the kindly, title-song-singing Mrs. Potts, you couldn't do better than Emma Thompson.

But the whole thing is just so labored, so effortful. It does what it tries to do, technically, but you feel all the work. Most of its charms are borrowed; rarely does it create charm of its own. As delightful as it sounds (and often is) to have, say, Ewan McGregor and Ian McKellen play Lumiere and Cogsworth, in the end it's like everything else about the movie: not as enchanting as you want it to be.

CEO from A1

digital services. All customers have access to the same information and services, regardless of the size of their neighborhood branch. Teaze equipped the library system with the tools needed to deliver library services in the 21st century. PGCMLS, for example, introduced 3D printing to customers.

Teaze also spearheaded the development of LINK, Leap Into New Knowledge, the first-in-the-state program that automatically provides all Prince George's County Public School students with a library account.

"Under the leadership of Ms. Teaze, the library system has expanded its reach in various areas, offering several new community-based services while remaining a central point for

county residents to access vital information resources. On behalf of the board of library trustees, I wish Kathleen the best in her next chapter," said Alease J. "Christy" Wright, president of the PGCMLS board.

Teaze strengthened the library system's early literacy and youth programs. Last year, over 33,000 young people registered for the Summer @ Your Library reading program. In addition, the library system hired a youth services coordinator for early literacy support, added STEM programs for students and provided summer meals for youth at library branches.

During Teaze's tenure, the library system responded to the need for a GED-testing site in Prince George's County by creating one at the South Bowie Branch so county residents

could take the test closer to home. Teaze also worked to build relationships with the county economic development agency and the One Stop Workforce Center as well as ensuring there was support staff for Spanish-speaking library card holders in all branches.

PGCMLS under Teaze's leadership renovated older library buildings into creative, welcoming spaces accommodating the growing needs of customers as well as building beautiful state-of-the-art new libraries, such as those in South Bowie and Laurel. Prince George's County has the most robust library renovation and construction program in the state.

Teaze is president of the Maryland Library Association, a professional organization that

provides professional development, communications and advocacy in support of the libraries in Maryland. In addition, she serves on the Commission for Education Excellence, which advises the Prince George's County executive on education-related matters, as well as the Early Childhood/Project LAUNCH Advisory Council, which helps young children and their families in Prince George's County.

"Our library system is a large and diverse organization," Teaze said. "Of the nearly 1-million residents of the county, there are 628,000 library customers. Using real data to support decision-making, we have inaugurated a measurement and evaluation system for business intelligence that is being emulated in libraries across the state and, above all, we deliver our serv-

A Little This, A Little That

Stretching Your Vacation Dollar for the Best Vacation Ever



PHOTO COURTESY NAPSI

Five simple steps can help your vacation dollar go farther.

(NAPSI)—U.S. travelers collectively spent \$2.6 billion a day on trips in 2015, which equates to \$30,033 a second, according to the U.S. Travel Association. Eating out, accommodations, rental cars, plane tickets and other expenses can make taking a vacation costly. But don't let the thought of a potentially lofty price tag deter you. Thankfully, there are plenty of ways to save without sacrificing your travel experience dream.

Here are some hints that may help:

1. Research free things to do for a memorable and affordable experience. Many nature parks are free to visit and make for a charming place for an outdoor family barbecue. During the summer there are often free concerts and other events to choose from. Museums and zoos also often offer a free admission day during the week.

2. Loyalty programs are a great way to put hard-earned points, dollars and miles to work. Most credit cards have a points program that help members earn cash back or use their points with partnering airlines and rental car companies. Travelers can also save with hotel and lodging companies that offer free loyalty programs, such as Wyndham Rewards. Program members can earn points with a Wyndham hotel stay and redeem a free night for every 15,000 points accumulated. For those interested in a private accommodation stay, Wyndham Rewards recently added 17,000 vacation homes to the already expansive 7,500 hotels available for redemption.

3. Curbing impulse-buying habits is one way to cut down on extra spending. Create a budget for all those small purchases that add up and stick to it. Limit souvenirs and take pictures to remember the trip instead.

4. Food and meals can offer a big opportunity to save money. During the planning stage, look for an accommodation that has a kitchen. Even if you cook only a few meals in, you can save a bundle. In fact, vacationers who stayed in a vacation home with a kitchen reported saving \$898 a week. You can also pick up the family's favorite snacks to bring along during day trips or for a late night refreshment. Not only will it cut costs, it will add convenience as well.

5. Coupons are another way to get experiences on the cheap. Websites such as Groupon and LivingSocial can help you save on some activities that many travelers normally don't consider. These websites are also great for getting ideas on what to do. Plus, some attractions sell discounted passes to multiple activities, museums or theme parks. Make sure to check their websites before visiting.

For more saving advice, head over to VacationDifferently.com. This travel resource offers great tips on family travel, ideas for vacation rental accommodations, and inspiration on how to travel a little bit differently. The articles can help make your next trip exceptional with new experiences, hidden treasures, and authentic places to call home while away.

NASA from A4

Similarly, GFSC has had a lasting legacy at the forefront of Earth Science research. The PACE mission will build upon this important history by providing observations of Earth's oceans and atmosphere that have direct consequences for our lives. Using PACE's data, NASA can answer critical questions about changing climate conditions on the overall health of Earth's oceans, how ecosystems respond to changes in the environment, and their relationship with airborne particles and clouds. Applications for policymakers and private industry include monitoring fisheries and water resources, detecting potential natural disasters, and protecting our communities against poor water and air quality.

We believe restructuring and consolidation of the Restore-L mission will lead to irreversible capability reductions. Eliminating the PACE mission would jeopardize NASA's ability to monitor some of our most critical environmental issues, such as harmful algal bloom and atmospheric quality predictions, and respond appropriately. As budget talks proceed, we ask that you vigorously support and advocate on behalf of the Restore-L and PACE programs to keep NASA on the cutting edge of technology and exploration.

Calendar of Events

May 4 — May 10, 2017

Jump 4 Fitness

Date and Time: Friday, May 5, 2017, 6–8 pm
 Description: Families are invited to Jump for Joy Fitness! and Fun! Enjoy an evening with the S.I.T.Y. Stars jump rope team, health assessments, smoothie samples, and fitness tips. Raffle and prizes too! Come on—jump in! Reservations are required.
 Cost: FREE
 Ages: All ages
 Location: Baden Community Center
 13601 Baden Westwood Road, Brandywine, MD
 Contact: 301-888-1500; TTY: 301-699-2544

Hot Club of Baltimore

Date and Time: Friday, May 5, 2017, 8 pm
 Description: The Hot Club of Baltimore performs the finest gypsy swing this side of the Atlantic inspired by the legendary French guitarist Django Reinhardt. Michael Joseph Harris is guitarist and artistic director of the group which consists of a collective of top jazz musicians.
 Cost: \$25/person; 10% discount for Montpelier members & seniors
 Ages: All ages welcome
 Location: Montpelier Arts Center
 9652 Muirkirk Rd., Laurel, MD
 Contact: 301-377-7800; TTY 301-699-2544

Fuel For Fitness

Date and Time: Saturday, May 6, 2017, 9 am–1 pm
 Description: Bring a friend and bring your family out to Harmony Hall Regional Center for “Fuel & Fitness” to enjoy: nutrition demonstrations, the Get Fit Mobile, giveaways, Zumba fitness demonstrations, Yoga, hand dancing, line dancing, and more!
 Cost: FREE!
 Ages: All ages welcome
 Location: Harmony Hall Regional Center
 10701 Livingston Road, Fort Washington, MD
 Contact: 301-203-6040; TTY 301-699-2544

Pen & Pose: A Workshop in Yoga and Writing

Date and Time: Saturday, May 6, 2017, 11 am
 Description: In this workshop, we'll use breath work, poses, mindfulness techniques, and writing exercises to connect with our bodies, mind, and spirit. Wear comfortable clothing, and bring a yoga mat and your favorite notebook and pen.
 Cost: Free
 Ages: Ages 18 & up
 Location: Montpelier Arts Center
 9652 Muirkirk Rd., Laurel, MD
 Contact: 301-377-7800; TTY 301-699-2544

Merry Month of May Celebration & Open House

Date and Time: Saturday, May 6, 2017, 12 noon–4 pm
 Description: Celebrate spring as we prepare for the upcoming growing season. Learn from experts on herb, flower, and vegetable gardens. Stroll among local vendors and enjoy a glorious spring day outdoors. Step inside our historic house for a free tour.
 Cost: Free
 Ages: All ages welcome
 Location: Surratt House Museum
 9118 Brandywine Road, Clinton, MD 20735
 Contact: 301-868-1121; TTY 301-699-2544

Girl Scout Day at the Museum

Date and Time: Saturday, May 6, 2017, 12 noon–4 pm
 Description: Brownies and Juniors are invited to Darnall's Chance House Museum where they can earn four fun patches all in one day! This year's activities include fencing, 18th-century dancing, portrait painting, and sewing. Space is limited. Reservations & payment required in advance. Rain date is Sunday, May 7.
 Cost: \$20/scout (includes badges)
 Ages: 7–11
 Location: Darnall's Chance House Museum
 14800 Governor Oden Bowie Drive
 Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
 Contact: 301-952-8010; TTY 301-699-2544

Zumba Marathon

Date and Time: Saturday, May 6, 2017, 1 p.m.–3 p.m.
 Description: Celebrate Fitness Month with a Zumba class, followed by a Zumba toning class!
 Cost: Resident: \$7; Non-resident: \$9
 Ages: 13 and older
 Location: Langley Park Community Center
 1500 Merrimac Drive, Hyattsville, MD
 Contact: 301-445-4508; TTY 301-445-4512

Comedy Night: I Can't Stop Laughing

Date and Time: Saturday, May 6, 2017, 8 pm
 Description: If you love to laugh then don't miss this Comedy Night at the Publick Playhouse! *I Can't Stop Laughing* features comedian SKIBA and Friends. SKIBA has appeared on *BET Comic View*, *Apollo*, the *Roland Martin Show*, and has headlined at major comedy venues around the world. He is bringing some of his funniest friends with him to keep you laughing all night long. This show contains adult-oriented material and may not be suitable for children under the age of 18.
 Cost: \$15/person
 Ages: 21 & up
 Location: Publick Playhouse
 5445 Landover Rd, Cheverly, MD
 Contact: 301-277-1710; TTY:301-699-2544

Skating Under the Stars

Date and Time: Saturday, May 6, 2017, 8–10 pm
 Description: Show off your roller skating moves with friends and family under the stars. Register online in the Parks and Rec e-store.
 Cost: Resident: \$2; Non-Resident: \$4
 Ages: 5 & up
 Location: Watkins Regional Park
 301 Watkins Park Drive, Upper Marlboro, MD
 Contact: 301-218-6700; TTY 301-699-2544

EARTH TALK ... Conventional Agriculture: Far From a Green Revolution

Dear EarthTalk:

Even though pesticides may take an environmental toll, isn't it worth it given how many more mouths we can feed thanks to their use?

—Mickey Jurowski,
 Palatine, IL

The advent of new technologies coming out of World War II led agricultural researchers to start experimenting with new classes of chemicals they could use to boost agricultural production. As human populations swelled, these “advances” were applied around the world so farmers could grow more food to feed the hungry masses and stave off widespread famine. This transition from essentially organic farming practices to what we now consider “conventional” (that is, aided by chemicals) has been dubbed “The Green Revolution.” But “green” in the name doesn't mean it's been good for the environment.

Chemical fertilizers are synthetic or inorganic materials added to soil to aid in plant life. Pesticides kill insects or other organisms that are harmful to crops, while herbicides kill any unwelcome vegetation that may affect their growth. According to data from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), American farmers use upwards of a billion pounds of pesticides every year. Meanwhile, the United Nations re-

ports that globally we use about five times that.

Indeed, the widespread adoption of these synthetic fertilizers, pesticides and herbicides has done a great job at boosting crop efficiency to feed more and more of us. For example, India was on the brink of a mass famine in the 1960s due to rapid population growth. Using the techniques of the green revolution, Indian farmers were able to grow enough produce and rice to stave off widespread starvation. Another advantage of pesticide use in India and elsewhere has been the prevention of disease, because pesticides kill insects carrying viruses that could be passed onto the crops.

However, pesticides not only kill the pests but also the natural enemies of those pests. In nature, everything is balanced out. Indeed, there is no free lunch, as pests respond to treatment by breeding stronger offspring that are resistant to these chemicals, and with natural predators gone, these pests will quickly multiply, which is why the need for pesticides to kill these pests keeps increasing.

Furthermore, persistent organic pollutants, also known as “POPs,” are highly toxic pesticides and chemicals that do not decompose. They poison non-target organisms in the environment because they are passed through the food chain (bioaccumulate). Consumption of POPs disrupts the endocrine system and is linked to cancer and infertility in humans. Pesticides



CREDIT: OREGON DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FLICKRCC
You call this a revolution? Spraying fields with synthetic chemicals to keep pests down is no way to take care of the planet and its inhabitants' health.

also take a toll on our environment, contaminating water and soil. Along with insects, pesticides are also toxic to fish, birds, frogs and more.

Pesticide use is very controversial and should be taken seriously. While here at home, the EPA has banned many pesticides that are harmful to our environment and our health (though the battle for safer food rages on), in many other countries agricultural oversight and environmental regulations are non-existent or unenforced. Fortunately, we can all be part of the solution by eschewing conventionally grown foods and opting for organic varieties whenever we can. While growing your own food is one sure way to know that what you're eating is safe, you can also find an increasingly large amount of organic

food in your local supermarket, let alone at a Whole Foods near you. Another great way to eat healthier and organic is to shop at local farmers' market. Find one near you by searching the free online database maintained by the non-profit Local Harvest.

CONTACTS: EPA,
www.epa.gov/agriculture/agriculture-organic-farming;
 Local Harvest, www.local-harvest.org/farmers-markets/;
 Whole Foods, wholefoods.com.

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Wind Farm from A3

would create up to 750 megawatts of power, enough to power 500,000 homes in Maryland, according to Paul Rich, the director of project development for US Wind.

The company expects to have the project built by 2020, Rich told the University of Maryland's Capital News Service. US Wind anticipates its project would create hundreds of engineering, construction and operating jobs.

There are reportedly about 2 million households in the state, according to the U.S. Census. Maryland gets its energy from coal, hydroelectricity, natural gas, nuclear, solar and wind.

While the US Wind project is closer to shore, expected to be built 12 to 17 miles off the coast, there are reports from Europe that the view attracts tourists, according to Rich. “They'll be seen, although minuscule. I think the upshot is that there are people who want to see them; people see them as a bright side of the future,” Rich said.

Rich said they have reached out to the Public Service Commission to discuss the potential for the US Wind project to be moved five miles further from the coast to address visual con-

cerns. If this happened, the current layout for the farm would change. Rich confirmed this move is not definite, but is a discussion he hopes to engage in.

Lars Thaaning, the co-CEO of Vineyard Wind, a company under Copenhagen Infrastructure Partners that has managed and invested in European offshore wind farms, spoke at an April 20 Business Network for Offshore Wind Conference about the differences between building in Europe versus building in Maryland.

Thaaning said the industry in the United States is still new and developing while the industry in Europe has been established. America needs more infrastructure investment, according to Thaaning. “There will not be a long-term market (for offshore wind in America) if we do not establish a supply chain,” Thaaning said.

The Public Service Commission held two public hearings—March 25 in Berlin, Maryland, and March 30 in Annapolis—where legislators and constituents testified on the proposals.

Don Murphy, a Catonsville, Maryland, resident who said he plans to retire in Ocean City, testified against the wind farm proposals at the hearing in Berlin.

Murphy said the project pro-

posals made him feel outraged, horrified and speechless.

“The decisions you make could have an adverse impact on Maryland's greatest economic engine, Ocean City,” Murphy said. The sight of the wind turbines could impact tourism in Ocean City, according to Murphy.

Murphy proposed that Maryland hold off building these wind farms until the industry is more established, with the fear that they would make headway on the project and regret doing so without proper research.

“It's said that the early bird gets the worm, but the second mouse gets the cheese,” Murphy said. “Why rush into this venture when you can wait long enough to just (receive) the benefits?”

Ocean City Mayor Rick Meehan acknowledged Murphy's concerns during his testimony. “I am concerned about our community and about, as I said, 26,000 property owners and over 8 million visitors that come to Ocean City every year,” Meehan said. Meehan reiterated Murphy's point that the commission shouldn't rush into a decision.

“I believe we should move forward, but we only have one chance to get this right,” Murphy said. “...We ought to make sure that we're not asking questions later that we didn't have the answers to in

the beginning. I can assure you, once this starts, there will be questions.”

Multiple people who gave testimony in Annapolis addressed the concerns from those opposed for aesthetic reasons. One man testifying asked those in the room to raise their hands if they found turbines aesthetically beautiful, to which many people responded in favor.

James McGarry, the Maryland and D.C. policy director for Chesapeake Climate Action Network, urged the Public Service Commission to take action and be the leader for offshore wind. “Maryland is one of the most vulnerable (states) in the country from climate change with sea level rises,” McGarry said.

“Maryland can be a central hub,” he said, during his March 30 testimony.

Morgan Folger, an environment and health fellow for Environment Maryland, testified March 30 that she believed the United States as a whole was behind the curve when it comes to wind energy and that Maryland should take the steps to expand the industry in the country.

“We all breathe the same air and we all drink the same water,” Folger said. “We're all equally impacted by the pollution.”

Leonard confirmed the last



WHAT'S YOUR CARBON FOOTPRINT?

Carbon footprint is the term generally used to describe the level of greenhouse gas emissions produced by specific activities such as using electricity, driving a car or disposing of waste. Everyone's carbon footprint is different depending on their location, habits and personal choices. Use the Environmental Protection Agency's online Carbon Footprint Calculator (www3.epa.gov/carbon-footprint-calculator) to estimate your footprint in three areas: home energy, transportation and waste. For a more accurate calculation, gather your utility bills (electricity, natural gas, fuel oil, propane) to learn your average use over a year.

Source: www.epa.gov