



NEW CITY COUNCIL TAKES OFFICE

On December 6, 2007, Mayor Sheila Dixon administered the oath of office to the President and Members of the 70th Baltimore City Council. The War Memorial Building was the site of the swearing-in ceremony, which included spiritual performances and inspirational remarks from dignitaries including former Congressman Kweisi Mfume, Mayor Dixon, and Governor Martin O'Malley. The ceremony also marked an historical occasion, as Council President Rawlings-Blake joined Mayor Dixon, Comptroller Joan Pratt and Baltimore City State's Attorney Patricia Jessamy as the first group of African American women to hold Baltimore's top four elected political seats.

In her address, Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake spoke of a shared vision for Baltimore's future, and the City Council's role in achieving that vision. "Twelve years on the City Council and a lifetime connected with public service has

taught me that power is never about me," she said. "My sole ambition is to make government work for the people it serves." Rawlings-Blake noted that she will focus on public education and public safety as City Council President. "We won't simply rest on the assumption that a rising tide will lift all boats," said Rawlings-Blake. "To sustain the success we've experienced in our neighborhoods, and to provide the foundation for success in the future, we must address the basic elements of that foundation."

The November election also saw three new faces elected to the City Council. Bill Henry was elected to the 4th District, representing North Baltimore, Councilman Bill Cole won in the 11th District and Warren Branch won a closely contested seat in the 13th District. This issue features an interview with the new members.



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
President
Baltimore City Council

By any measure, 2007 was a very productive year for the City Council. As we begin a new chapter with the 70th City Council, I'd like to share with you some of the work the City Council has done to improve the quality of life for Baltimore residents.

Last February the City Council passed **07-0392 Health – Indoor Smoking**, banning smoking in Baltimore's bars, restaurants, and private clubs, paving the way for the General Assembly to follow suit with a statewide prohibition. The smoking ban took effect throughout Maryland in February 2008.

To address chronic staffing shortages in the Baltimore Police Department, I sought and Mayor Dixon provided funding for an aggressive new police recruitment effort. You have probably noticed the recruiting campaign on local radio and television stations. I also met with rank and file police officers to solicit their recommendations on crime-fighting on the streets, and submitted a report detailing these findings to Mayor Dixon. These efforts resulted in an innovative staffing program in the Northeastern District, with overlapping shifts, effectively increasing the number of officers on duty during peak crime hours. If this pilot program is successful, it will be expanded to the entire department. The City Council also passed Mayor Dixon's **07-0738 Gun Offender Registration** legislation, requiring Baltimore gun offenders to register their name and address within 48 hours of a gun conviction or release from jail. Many of those arrested on homicide charges have prior gun convictions, and this registry will help police target prior offenders for questioning if criminal activity increases in a



particular neighborhood. In June the Council passed **06-0558 Inclusionary Housing**. This law will require new housing developments of 30 units or more that receive significant city subsidy to make a certain percentage of their units affordable. In another measure to improve the quality of life in Baltimore's neighborhoods, the City Council approved **07-0665 Eviction Chattels**, prohibiting landlords from tossing tenants' personal belongings onto the sidewalk after an eviction - a long-standing practice that had forced the city to haul those items away at taxpayer expense.

In a similar vein, **07-0717 Neighborhood Nuisances** gives city police the authority to take action against residences or businesses that significantly affect neighboring residents by being disorderly, including eviction of residents for up to one year. Finally, Council Bill **07-0801 Minority and Women's Business Program - Reauthorization** adopted new targets for how much money minority subcontractors should receive from companies that bid on city work. The new rules would apply to any construction contract over \$1 million and for all architectural and engineering contracts. Specific goals for each ethnic group's participation in various kinds of contracts will be set by the Mayor's Office of Minority and Women-Owned Business Development.

Together with the help of many conscientious citizens, we are moving our City forward by investing where Baltimore lives. The City Council is delivering on our promise to make government work for the people it serves. As your elected representatives, this City Council will work with you to create strong, self-sustaining communities, and a positive climate for investment—financial and personal—in the City's future. I look forward to building on this foundation with my colleagues on the Baltimore City Council.

City Council Task Force on Childhood Obesity Releases Report

The Baltimore City Council Task Force on Childhood Obesity, the result of a City Council Resolution sponsored by 9th District Councilwoman Agnes Welch, released its final report on January 9, 2008 including recommendations for action to reverse the dangerously rising trend of obesity among children in Baltimore. Addressing the national increase of childhood obesity over the past thirty years, the Task Force developed recommendations to place Baltimore in a proactive role, tackling a nationwide crisis here at home.



“My commitment to this issue comes from twenty-five years as a member of this City Council,” said Councilwoman Welch. “During that time, the rate of childhood obesity has more than doubled, reaching epidemic levels. Today, we stand in a position to reverse the dangerous trend of childhood obesity, prevent it from infecting future generations, and stop the negative health effects dead in their tracks.”

The complete report is available on the City Council’s website at www.baltimorecitycouncil.com. Among the recommendations

Recommendations of Childhood Obesity Task Force

- Promote healthy food choices and physical activity by improving conditions of neighborhood parks and improving access to nutritious food for Baltimore residents.
- Create “Health Zones” surrounding targeted neighborhood schools to engage an entire community to be healthier.
- Establish nutrition education requirements in schools and renegotiate with food vendors to provide healthier choices to students, and aggressively promote those choices by engaging educators, staff, and students.
- Eliminate unhealthy foods from after school sites and promote wellness programs.
- Increase access to government-run nutrition programs and improve food provisions in day care centers.

included in the report are: Promotion of healthy food choices and physical activity by improving conditions of neighborhood parks, improving access to healthy food choices in low-income neighborhoods, and developing policies that will support healthy eating among City residents.

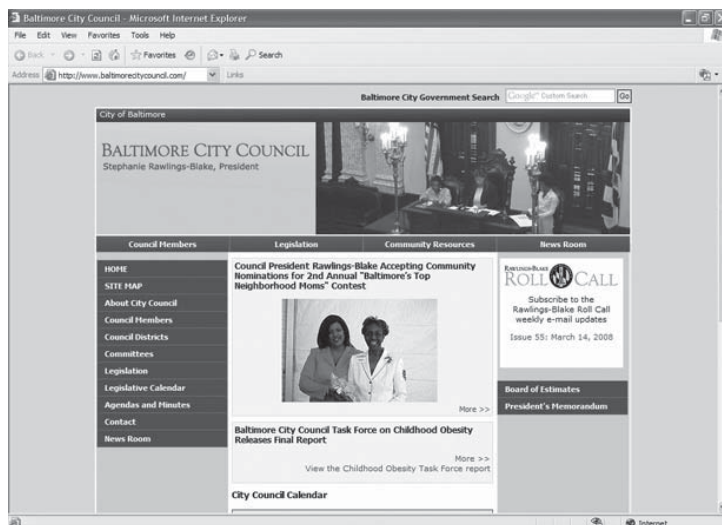
Joined by Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, members of the Task Force focused on all aspects of society in taking on this issue. “Let’s be clear, we did not get into this epidemic overnight, and we will not resolve it overnight,” said Council President Rawlings-Blake. “As we recognize our role in reversing this trend, let’s today resolve to recognize the role we all play – as parents, as teachers, as mentors, and as role models – in ending the epidemic of childhood obesity.”

UPDATE: On March 17, the City Council passed a bill banning the use of trans fats in food served in Baltimore restaurants, and the measure was signed into law by Mayor Dixon, to take effect in September 2009.

City Council Website Redesigned: Improved Legislative, Community Information

The City Council’s website was redesigned in September 2007, with improved navigation and a search feature that enables you to search multiple Baltimore City government websites. For our website visitors who use the site for legislative research, we’ve added a “Legislative Record” page that includes the Agenda and Journal of each City Council meeting from 2003 to the present. The Council Journal is the written record of all actions taken on the floor at each meeting. The improved Legislative Record page will make it much easier for website visitors to review the proceedings of the City Council.

The new website also features detailed information on each City Council district, including community associations, schools, police and fire stations and recreation centers. If you have any suggestions for improving the site, please call the Council President’s office at 410-396-4804.



Please visit our website at www.baltimorecitycouncil.com

Up Close and Personal: A Conversation

The 2007 election saw three new faces elected to the City Council. Bill Henry was elected to the 4th District, Bill Cole won in the 11th District and Warren Branch in the 13th District. We sat down with the new members to discuss the issues.

As new Council members, describe your first impressions of the job.

COLE: The time commitment is overwhelming at times. Just in order to be brought up to speed on everything. There's a lot of change happening in the 11th District and representing downtown, you've got a lot of zoning issues, Liquor Board issues, and Planning Department issues, so I could spend a lot of time here and still never feel like I'm catching up. Having served in Annapolis, I knew how that worked, with the 90-day session. Here, it's a 12-month process. The other thing that has opened my eyes is the real differences on the Council. I mean, there are some tremendous differences in background, in policy, in style, and that makes for an interesting blend when you put all those personalities together.

BRANCH: I'm enjoying it very much. I get a chance to reach out and touch people from the office. I get to go out in the communities. Hopefully we can try to restore hope in our communities. In the community that I live, many people believe that the Council has not been very active, for whatever reason. But the name of the game for me is to try to restore the hope, by being out there touching people's lives, working along with them, letting people know I'm available, returning all my telephone calls. It's something that I learned from being in government for 23 years. I just don't know any better way to put it: being involved. I've made this a full-time commitment.



In your opinion, what is the most important role that the City Council plays in City government, where can you have the most impact?

BRANCH: One aspect with the City Council, in the budget aspect, we can hopefully find money for some of the issues and concerns such as the housing situations, partnering with the mayor's agencies, working together with them would be an asset.

COLE: Bluntly, at home. It used to frustrate me when I was in Annapolis, when the Council would weigh in on issues that were happening down in Annapolis or in Washington. I'd rather worry about the issues that we have control over, rather than those that we don't have control over: making certain that government is running efficiently, working on solutions to community development issues like vacant properties. There are things that we can do that are relevant, and within our scope, as opposed to worrying about what's happening with state legislation. We also spend a lot of time talking about the challenges that exist in education because of the city-state partnership. We have limited control in what happens with the school system, but we ought to make certain that the control we do have we're using appropriately. We can provide budget oversight, and management training to make certain that the money is going where the taxpayers intended.

Speaking of the school system, all three of you are assigned to the Council's Education Committee. What innovative approaches do you have to improving the City's public schools and the lives of Baltimore's young people?

COLE: Having kids at Federal Hill Preparatory, I've seen firsthand how the system works. In my

situation it works well because there's a strong principal, with some really dedicated teachers. When I worked for Congressman Cummings, he generally knew when he visited a school within five minutes whether that school was struggling or not. If you walked in and the kids were in their classrooms, if there wasn't a lot of trash, and you didn't see graffiti, the inside environment was conducive to learning, and you could tell that. So I notice it in my kid's school: the school may be old, but the teachers are very energetic, they've got a principal that's engaged. And I think if we can replicate those models of success around the city, then we'll have a much better school experience.



HENRY: Yeah, I took advantage of our wonderful seven-week recess to go around and visit the schools, the libraries, the rec centers, the firehouses, the police commanders in the district, and one of the things that I noticed visiting these schools: that no matter how good the principal is and how engaged the teachers are, you could definitely tell the difference between the schools where everybody who was there was trying really hard—and the schools where everybody there was trying really hard—AND the *parents* were supporting them. That, to me, has been the more graphic difference. So far, I haven't run into a bad principal yet. But I have run into situations where clearly, they've been unable to connect to the parents.

So what's the City Council or Education Committee role in that?

COLE: The parental involvement thing is important, because I do know that Bill is right: many of the most successful schools, even in neighborhoods that may be struggling otherwise, have a strong PTO. So I think the

n with Your New City Council Members

Council can find ways to encourage parental involvement—in the sense that we could help these PTOs do some creative projects in the schools. But there is a distinct difference in a school that has a lot of parental involvement and a school that doesn't.

BRANCH: I would like to try to seek two things, special education, and seeking alternatives for youth who are good with their hands, whereby we can find different trade courses. Like vo-tech.

COLE: Yeah, over the last two decades schools have moved away from vo-tech opportunities. Southern High School used to have a big vo-



hour, plumbing, construction...

COLE: Let's talk about construction. You've got all these cranes in downtown Baltimore, and you walk those job sites and there's not many Baltimore residents working those jobs. And it's because we're not training people: you talk to the unions and they would love to have more city kids coming into their apprenticeship programs, but we're not getting them to the door, and that's something the school system has to play a role in.

BRANCH: Exactly, I agree, especially with that biotech area. You know what I would like to see with the youth? One of the things I would like to see is put these kids in a vo-tech at least three hours a day, send them out to corporate businesses, if they want become a paralegal send them to a law office, if they want to be a carpenter, send them to the union.

HENRY: When did this sort of prevailing attitude start in education of "everybody goes to college?"

COLE: In the late eighties, when standardized testing became the norm for "achievement." You know they started doing testing to show that people were learning, and everything shifted from "we need careers" to "we need kids that can take tests."

HENRY: We need kids who can re-hab houses! Cause I gotta tell you, have you been to anything relating to trying to get people to re-invest in their neighborhoods, to fix up their houses or their commercial dwellings? The complaint is always: even if we want to, we can't get a good contractor now, because the pool is so small. Somehow we lost all this whole chunk of kids who should have been shunted into learning a trade, and they were instead steered into this higher education track, that didn't

fit them, didn't motivate them, and so they dropped out. And now we're all the poorer for it. So definitely, I would be 100% supportive of [bringing back vo-tech].

COLE: You know there's a bizarre phenomenon that only really exists in higher ed, where you take the best and brightest out of the classroom in order to pay them. When you're a great teacher, when you establish yourself as the top of your profession, we take you out of the profession, and we make you an administrator because that's the only way to get paid. When you're an outstanding principal and you're honored, the first thing we do is we move you out of the school. I have never understood that. Leave the great teachers in the schools: let everybody come to them to learn. Leave the best principals in the schools, and let all the other principals come to them to learn. Pay them for being great, but pay them in place, don't move them to North Avenue. This is a long frustration of mine.

As new members, were there any hazing rituals you had to endure?

COLE: I had a couple of cases of spoiled apple juice at my door this morning, expired in 2005. Which is funny that it was spoiled, but my new secretary actually didn't know it was spoiled, and she drank some. She's still up there, so I hope she's okay.

BRANCH: I still have the union still taking some money out from me. I shared a personal joke with the Council President and I made her aware that if there's ever an issue, maybe I'll get City Union of Baltimore to represent me, because they're still taking dues out of my paycheck.

HENRY: (Laughing) That's hilarious.

COLE: (Laughing) That's classic.

tech. Southern is now gone: it's Digital Harbor. Not every kid is going to grow up to work on computers. Not every child wants to necessarily go to college to pursue their dream. They may want to go to some type of technical school, but we're not necessarily giving them those skills in the city anymore, because of testing and things like that. One of the most frustrating things is we're pigeonholing every kid, and saying "you have to do this academically because these are going to be your options," when in fact if you think about it, who's going to fix our cars in 15 years? We don't have any mechanics left in the city, because we're not training anybody to be mechanics anymore. These are great jobs that pay well and have benefits, and for people who are not inclined to sit in a classroom, there should be alternatives.

BRANCH: Exactly, with the drug cultures in many communities we want to be able to lure kids into areas of entrepreneurship, where they can make just as much money as being out on the corners with their own businesses and provide for their families. So if we can train them in auto mechanics, which is paying about \$20-\$30 an

The President's SchoolSpot: highlighting City schools' brightest stars

President's SchoolSpot

The President's SchoolSpot is a feature of the weekly "Rawlings-Blake Roll Call" e-mail newsletter. Each week in the President's SchoolSpot, Council President Stephanie Rawlings-Blake highlights the outstanding accomplishments of Baltimore City Schools students and staff. Here are some highlights of the great stories we've shared over the past few months in our weekly emails.

Western High Wins Big in its First Robotics Competition

The **Western High School Doves** captured a total of five trophies at the Baltimore City Public Schools Robotics VEX Competition, held last December at Morgan State University, where 24 teams from eight city schools competed. The students' engineering and technology skills are put to the test as they aim to build the most innovative robots possible and work together to obtain the most points possible. In the spring, PBS will air a two-hour documentary on the group. Western was chosen out of 1300 possible teams nationwide because its students shatter stereotypes about the typical student interested in engineering.

Baltimore Students Honored in Business Plan Competition

On January 11, high school students from all over Baltimore participated in the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship's City-Wide Business Plan Competition. The winners were: First Prize - **Jessica Boone, Institute of Business & Entrepreneurship**; Second Prize - **Brian Sessions, National Academy Foundation**; Third Prize - **Tarnika Blocker, Edmondson Westside High School**. The NFTE is a non-profit foundation in Baltimore that provides low-income youth resources to start and operate their own small businesses. For more information about NFTE Baltimore, call 443-451-7480 or visit their website at www.nfte.com.



Cecil Elementary School is Awarded Blue Ribbon Status

In December, State Schools Superintendent Dr. Nancy Grasmick announced that **Cecil Elementary** is a 2008 Maryland Blue Ribbon School of Excellence. Cecil was nominated in a category recognizing economically disadvantaged schools that have shown significant improvement on the Maryland School Assessment tests in the past three years. **Principal Roxanne Forr** says collaborative instruction and high teacher retention have fostered the school's success. The Blue Ribbon Schools Program is a state and national program that recognizes schools showing high reading and mathematics achievement.

Dunbar High School Celebrates Championship Sports Teams

Last August, a week before the football season began, Dunbar High School's beloved football coach **Ben Eaton** died suddenly. The goal of new head coach **Lawrence Smith** and his team was to win another championship in Eaton's memory. On December 8 at M&T Bank Stadium, the Poets reached their goal by defeating Allegany, 58-34, in the Class 1A state championship. It was the team's second state title in a row and the first state title for Coach Smith. Dunbar went undefeated this season, 14-0 and in their four playoff games, they scored 186 points, a new state record. The Poets have won 24 straight games, dating to last season. The Baltimore Ravens have also named Coach Smith their 2007 High School Coach of the Year. Congratulations to Dunbar junior **Tavon Austin** for being named the All-Metro Offensive Player of the Year for the second straight year and to senior **Keon Redhead**, who is the Defensive Player of the Year.



Poly Students Meet Supreme Court Justices

Last November, seniors **Dominique Duval** and **Michael Fletcher** of **Baltimore Polytechnic Institute** and their history teacher Dennis Jutras were among a select group who met, dined and talked with some members of the U.S. Supreme Court. Michael: "Discussing legal issues with Justice Anthony Kennedy was hands-down one of the most amazing experiences of my life," said Michael. "It also renewed my interest in pursuing an education in law and attending law school." Dominique also came away impressed. "I learned that it's important to justify your beliefs and stick by them, no matter what others may say," she said. "Justice Scalia, being an extreme conservative and originalist, justified his views quite well. Having misunderstood and dismissed his views before, I now respect him for what he believes."

George Washington Elementary Named National Blue Ribbon School

The hard work of **Principal Susan Burgess**, students, teachers, and staff has paid off at **George Washington Elementary School #022**. The U.S. Department of Education has named it a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence, one of the nation's highest

honors in education. GWES is one of seven No Child Left Behind-Blue Ribbon Schools in the state and one of 287 in the country. When Principal Burgess arrived at the school in 2003, only 32 percent of third-graders had passed the state test in reading. By spring 2007, that pass rate had soared to 97 percent, with 63 percent of third-graders scored at the advanced level on the test.

Members of the 2007-2011 Baltimore City Council



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Community Calendar

Upcoming City Council Schedule

May 5 - Council Meeting	June 2 - Council Meeting
May 13 - Taxpayer's Night	June 9 - Council Meeting
May 13-16 - Budget Hearings	July 21 - Council Meeting
May 19 - Council Meeting	August 11 - Council Meeting

Council Meetings are held at 5:00 pm in the Clarence "Du" Burns Council Chamber, 4th Floor, City Hall. They are also broadcast live on cable channel 25.

2008 City Holidays

Monday, May 26	Memorial Day (Observed)
Friday, July 4	Independence Day
Monday, September 1	Labor Day
Monday, October 13	Columbus Day (Observed)
Tuesday, November 4	Election Day
Tuesday, November 11	Veterans Day
Thursday, November 27	Thanksgiving Day
Thursday, December 25	Christmas Day

2008 Showcase of Nations Ethnic Festivals

May 30-June 1	Polish Festival Patterson Park	August 9-10	FestAfrica 2008 Patterson Park
June 6-8	St. Nicholas Greek Folk Festival St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church	August 22-24	PowWow Native American Festival Patterson Park
June 21-22	LatinoFest Patterson Park	Sept. 6-7	Ukrainian Festival Patterson Park
June 27-29	African American Heritage Festival Oriole Park at Camden Yards	Sept. 12-13	Irish Festival Canton Waterfront Park
July 11-13	Caribbean Carnival Festival Druid Hill Park	September 13	Korean American Festival War Memorial Plaza
August 2-3	International Festival Poly/Western High School	October 17-19	Russian Festival Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church



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What people are saying about the Roll Call...

I love your Roll Call email! I've lived in Baltimore for over 15 years and have never seen so much information in one place. Thank you for including me on your email list.

— C.H.

The President's SchoolSpot is great. I am a pastor, and I am going to print this information out to show to my youth as an incentive to help them realize the greatness in them.

— R. M.

Thank you for this comprehensive and thoughtful update.

— D.R.S.

Thanks for sharing this newsletter and we will be sure to pass this on to our residents at all of our communities!

— T. H.

Thank you for a very informative newsletter about important issues and other interesting local and community events that are happening in Baltimore. May I also thank you for the well written, grammatically correct articles which are a pleasant change from most publications that I have read in the past. You and your editors are to be applauded. Keep up the good work.

— G. H.

Thank you so much for getting this information out. It's such a positive publication. It's just nice to see nice things happening in Baltimore.

— M.N.