

# ST. MICHAELS JOURNAL

## QUARTERLY REPORT



### STATE OF THE TOWN

We have all been through a difficult year with unforeseen challenges that have tested families, businesses, and government in ways we could never have imagined before the pandemic hit. We don't know when it will be sufficiently under control and safe enough to return to the old normal, but as we enter 2022, the Town of St. Michaels is well-positioned. Town government is dealing with the same economic factors that have impacted private industry—a shortage of both personnel and supplies. But, thanks to pre-planning and our capable staff, the Town is doing better than most.

The Christmas in St. Michaels parade returns after last year's Covid cancellation.

## FINANCES

The town's financial health is in excellent shape. Last winter and spring, the commissioners, facing the uncertainty of the pandemic, trimmed spending, and cut taxes for fiscal year 2022. Half way through the fiscal year, we are now looking at the potential of a surplus.

We have also benefited from an infusion of CARES Act funds, amounting to just over a million dollars. The Town has received half—the first of two installments. The commissioners have earmarked that money for eligible projects to benefit the greatest number of residents for the greater good. The first priority is the water department. The Town needs a new well to meet increasing demand. The Town will also be installing smart meters to automate billing and accounting, and to protect the water supply. The meters will eliminate waste by instantly identifying leaks in the system. Our public works crew will no longer need to conduct house-by-house meter readings, which will free them up for other projects.



## TRASH COLLECTION

Even more work hours will be gained by freeing our public works crew from collecting trash. Starting in January, that job will be handled by a commercial hauler. Residents will

**“Residents will not be charged any more than they are already paying...”**

not be charged any more than they are already paying in town taxes. If a residence or business needs more than one can, a second will be provided with a charge of \$25/month. Trash will be picked up on Monday instead of Tuesday. Yard waste collection will remain on Tuesday. Recycling will still be collected on Fridays.

## ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

As we've seen from recent king tides, flooding is a real and growing threat. The Town is actively preparing for long range predictions of sea level rise by appointing a Climate Change/Sea Level Rise Commission. The CC/SLR commission has worked with a professional environmental consulting firm to identify mitigation projects. They are already working on engineering studies, and seeking grant monies to raise Mill Street where it floods. Other projects will follow soon.



## INFRASTRUCTURE

The Town is moving forward on developing a new town office and new police station. Past studies have shown that both buildings are inadequate and need to be replaced. The commissioners hired the Faux Group, professional planners, to independently study possible locations. They looked at 14 potential sites, and met with numerous town stakeholders. They've also taken into account the 2015 Comprehensive Plan and other studies that date back to 1986. The report will additionally address strategies for future development with emphasis on affordable housing. And it will offer perspective on parking issues and traffic management. The Faux Group will be presenting their final report and recommendations at the Commissioners meeting in January. The full report will be posted on the Town website ([stmichaelsmd.gov](http://stmichaelsmd.gov)) as soon as it is submitted and accepted.

## MUNICIPAL OPERATIONS

The Town is in the process of upgrading and modernizing all administrative functions. That includes rebooting our computer and communications capabilities. We are reevaluating our marketing strategy to assure that the taxpayers and other stakeholders are getting the most bang for the buck. The Town is updating its employee manual to bring it up to current accepted standards, and to ensure more accountability and productivity. Employees are already filling out time sheets for the first time since they were mandated 12 years ago. The Town has hired an additional accounting professional to supplement our bookkeeping and billing functions. Our nationwide search for a new town manager/administrator is underway, and potential candidates will be interviewed in February.



## **ROADS AND SIDEWALKS**

A long-delayed state highway project will have major impact over the next two years. There will be short-term pain resulting in long-term gain. The Town will be working to make it as painless as possible. The State Highway Administration will be rebuilding the non-ADA compliant sidewalks starting at North Street and working southward to Seymour Avenue. Within the historic district, the Town will be paying to substitute brick for concrete, along with granite curbs. The existing brick sidewalks will be largely unaffected. After the sidewalks are in place, the state will repave Talbot Street from one end of town to the other. The Town will be providing frequent progress reports and daily alerts to where the activity will be impacting travel lanes. It will be a major disruption and we ask for patience. The Town will work closely with SHA to see that the work is completed efficiently and on schedule. The Town website has a link to the project with timely updates.

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

This is your town, and the commissioners and staff are here to serve. Your feedback is welcome and valuable. The commissioners will keep you informed, as we move forward, with this quarterly newsletter, and electronic media. We also urge you to register for the Town's Constant Contact messaging service and to keep an eye on the Town website which will soon be more user friendly. You can find contact information for the commissioners and every department on [stmichaelsmd.gov](http://stmichaelsmd.gov).

On behalf of our dedicated staff, and numerous volunteer board and commission members, the Commissioners of St. Michaels wish you and yours a healthy and safe new year.