

# County Executive's Weekly Message



**For the week of May 29, 2017**

My fellow residents of Cecil County:

I want to thank everyone who attended the public hearing on Tuesday night and shared with County Council their thoughts on my FY2018 proposed budget. I was there to listen to **YOU**, the citizens of Cecil County and find out first-hand how my proposed budget will affect you, your families, and your businesses. I applaud everyone who exercised their first amendment right to freedom of speech in this County and I appreciated the respect demonstrated by all who attended the hearing. The County Council has until June 6, 2017 to consider my FY2018 Proposed Budget and decide to vote either for or against my plan to move Cecil County forward. Please make sure the County Council hears from you prior to the vote on June 6 at 7pm and please keep in mind the following:

- **NOBODY LIKES A TAX INCREASE**– This County has enjoyed a stagnant income tax rate for 15 years and only a .0007% increase to the property tax rate in the last 6 years. I am certain the items you buy, such as food and clothing, have seen increases in cost during that time. If we want our County to meet the needs of its citizens now and into the future, we need additional resources. However, at the same time, I will continue to **scrutinize** County operations and employees to ensure your tax dollars are effectively used and not wasted.
- **FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY**– The goal to eliminate structural deficits and thus being “fiscally responsible” has greater meaning than merely balanced budgets and working within its limits. The County’s management and budget goal is to be fiscally responsible. In Cecil County, Fiscal Responsibility means we listen and determine what the citizens need and want, review and decide on the most efficient and productive methods to provide those services, and set rates and fees to pay for those services. The result of those efforts should frugally spend the taxpayer dollar to provide the good services the citizens have requested and avoid the deficits that burden our future.
- **NEW CASTLE COUNTY VS CECIL COUNTY**– Many comments during the public hearing focused on businesses and citizens moving to New Castle County, DE because of the property tax rate. Please note the current property tax rate in New Castle County is considerably less than the current property tax rate in Cecil County. However, New Castle County has a separate school tax on homeowners to fund the operations of its schools. Cecil County has a combined property and school tax. If you look at New Castle County’s FY2018 budget request, you will find that the County does not even have a Department of Public Works. The State of Delaware maintains 89% of all roads within the State of Delaware. If we removed from our operating and capital budgets the cost of operating and maintaining the Roads in this County, our property taxes would be less. It is also worth noting that in 2014 the population in New Castle County was 522,778, which is approximately 5 times the number of people who live in Cecil County.
- **EDUCATION & PUBLIC SAFETY**– Of those who spoke at the public hearing, whether you were for or against the tax increases, the speakers agreed that we should not diminish our support for education or public safety in this County. I was very happy to hear the statements of support for Cecil County Public Schools, Cecil College and the Cecil County Public Library. As I said last week, if these institutions are funded adequately, they will improve the quality of life for our citizens and save the County’s future budgets from higher incarceration costs, drug abuse costs, and judiciary costs (just to name a few). I was also pleased with the support for the Sheriff’s Office and the Department of Emergency Services. The County’s expenditures for Education and Public Safety in my proposed budget for FY2018 equal 72% of the total General Fund budget. I do not know how I am to fund 72% of the total general fund budget to the levels necessary to support these functions without the revenue to pay for them. I am glad that you agree these services are as important as I do, but I cannot support what they need to provide good service without revenue to support the efforts.
- **EYE ON THE FUTURE**– Many of you expressed agreement with my vision to address Cecil County’s needs. Again, nobody likes to pay more for something. My goal is to set the current tax rate at a level to fund **current** and **future** needs. I want to attract new businesses and citizens to our County in order to raise the revenues needed to help support our services of the future. I believe this budget is creating the environment necessary for growth to occur. New businesses are on the way, but they are not here yet. The needs of our County require our attention today.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan McCarthy".

Dr. Alan McCarthy  
Cecil County Executive