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Collins to advocate for light rail on MACo board

By Paul Lagasse plagasse@somdnews.com 9 hrs ago



Commissioners' President Reuben B. Collins II (D), shown here outlining policy initiatives after taking the oath of office last month, was recently elected to the Maryland Association of Counties' board of directors.

STAFF PHOTO BY PAUL LAGASSE

Board of Charles County Commissioners' President Reuben B. Collins II (D) was one of 16 county officials elected to the board of directors of the Maryland Association of Counties last week.

Lt. Gov. Boyd Rutherford (R) officiated at the installation ceremony Jan. 3 during MACo's winter conference in Cambridge.

“It’s a great honor,” Collins told the Maryland Independent. “To be an elected representative of that board will reap benefits for Charles County citizens in the future because we will actually be at the table to discuss policy initiatives that impact the entire state.”

This is Collins’ second time serving on the board; he was previously elected during his second term as District 3 commissioner.

MACo executive director Michael Sanderson said he was pleased that Collins was returning to the board.

“MACo really depends on veteran leaders to help guide our association, especially following a high turnover election,” Sanderson said. “We know that Commissioners’ President Collins will stand up for Charles County and for our statewide membership.”

MACo is a nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy organization that represents the interests of local government to the state’s General Assembly. Board members serve one-year terms on a rotating basis to help maintain a representational balance by region, demographics and political party.

“The board members and the leadership go through great pains to not separate into blue and red,” Collins said. “The board tries to create an agenda that reflects what’s in the best interest for all Maryland residents. And I think they’ve done an effective job.”

This year, in addition to Collins, the region is represented by Prince George’s County Executive Angela Alsobrooks (D) and St. Mary’s County Commissioner President Randy Guy (R).

Collins noted that although Charles County is considered part of MACo’s rural caucus based on its population, it faces many of the same issues as more urbanized counties.

“As almost a hybrid, we can benefit from the discussions with the large counties as well with continuing our concerns about issues and impact in rural counties,” Collins said.

Two of the issues that Collins hopes to focus on during his time on the MACo board are increased education funding from the state and support for a long-sought-after light rail system between Washington, D.C., and St. Mary’s County.

“[Alsobrooks] has certainly suggested her support [for a light rail line],” Collins said. “I know that the entire [Prince George’s County] council has in the past been supportive because it impacts a significant number of Prince George’s County residents.”

“You can argue that there’s more of an interest for that rail line in Prince George’s County than there is in Charles County because three-quarters of the line is going to be in Prince George’s County,” he said.

Collins said that he intended to seek support for the light rail line by pitching it “from a regional perspective.”

“At the end of the day there’s not as much of a disconnect when we talk about transportation in the metro D.C. area than we might think,” Collins said. “It is a statewide issue.”

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