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A group of students pauses to read the next few pages of the book "Where the Wild Things Are" as they enjoy the new storybook trail at Deerfield Elementary School in Edgewood Wednesday afternoon.

MATT BUTTON/THE AEGIS PHOTOS

Walking trail combines nature and 'a good story'

Students check out new Storybook Trail at Deerfield Elementary

By DAVID ANDERSON
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Deerfield Elementary School second-grader Arriyah Stevens has read Maurice Sendak's "Where the Wild Things Are" in standard book form in school, but with the opening of the Storybook Trail on her school's Edgewood campus, she and her classmates can now read the classic story while walking along an outdoor trail.

"I like how they used the details of the book," 8-year-old Arriyah said after a grand opening celebration for the Storybook Trail Wednesday afternoon.

She and other Deerfield second-graders walked the trail, which is along the edge of the field behind the school, with eighth-grade students from neighboring Edgewood Middle School. The middle school students built the 16 wooden boxes studded along the grass, boxes that contain pages from the book.

Trail users can stop at each station and read the next part of the story. Each box, mounted on a wooden stake, contains two pages.

"It's a nice outside-the-box idea for our students," said Greg Lane, principal of



Deerfield Elementary School students Dayanira Hernandez, back, Akhri Farrington, center and Tady Johnson, front, enjoy some ice pops while making some art during the opening of the new storybook trail at Deerfield Elementary School.

Deerfield, which has 765 pupils in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade.

"A storybook trail offers a unique experience where you can indulge your imagination with colorful pages along a walkway," according to a news release from Harford County Public Schools.

"This trail is sure to inspire a love of

reading and sense of adventure in young children."

Arriyah and fellow second-grader Tady Johnson, also 8 years old, both said they like the concept of the trail and that they enjoyed spending time with older students during the grand opening.

"It was good to [get to] know people that we didn't know," Tady said.

Each Deerfield second-grader was accompanied by a pair of eighth-graders from Edgewood Middle on their walk along the trail. The older students also talked with the children about literacy, did arts-and-craft projects with them and enjoyed freeze pops together.

"It's great to see the middle school kids share their love of literacy with the elementary school students," Edgewood Middle principal Melissa Williams said.

The concept was developed by middle school faculty member Ellen Montoya, an eighth-grade science teacher. Her students used a grant of about \$900 from the Harford County Education Foundation to purchase supplies. They built the trail boxes with help from Edgewood High School technology students and the high school's wood shop, according to Montoya and the HCPS news release.

Montoya said one of the best parts about the project was watching the middle-schoolers interact with the second-graders

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Inspector accused of bias against drag shows

LGBTQ supporters and performers say licenses were 'threatened' to cancel events

By ERIKA BUTLER
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Cody Odachowski is a drag performer — he puts on makeup, a very big wig, fake breasts and a costume to sing other people's songs.

"I want people to have fun. The events we have are not to push an agenda, to sway people to do things the way we want them to, it's to forget about the crap in this world and have a good time," Odachowski told the Harford County liquor board. "I am here today to advocate for all drag performers being told no, and that we can't have fun and enjoy ourselves in this very hateful, bigoted world."

Odachowski is one of more than two dozen people who attended the two-hour meeting of the liquor board, officially the Harford County Liquor Control Board, in Bel Air on Wednesday, many calling for an end to "discrimination" and "homophobia" they said led to the cancellation of several drag shows over the last few months.

Many waiting outside the small meeting room in the lobby and on the sidewalk for their chance to protest what they say has been discriminatory and threatening behavior by the liquor board inspector, William A. Colburn.

"Mr. Colburn's statement to me, his exact words were, 'I cannot tell you to cancel this event, but if you go forward with it, I will shut you down.' I have a video recorder and as soon as something happens, I will pull your license," Larry Dougherty Jr. said. "I felt threatened. That's kind of a bullying tactic."

Dougherty is a liquor licensee in Harford County of a nonprofit organization, but

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Funding for school projects amended

Will affect Joppatowne High upgrades, other work

By DAVID ANDERSON
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The Harford County Council has put forth a handful of amendments that adjust spending for school system capital projects, such as upgrades to Joppatowne High School, renovation of swimming pools and improvements to special education facilities.

Council members have not yet put forth amendments to County Executive Barry Glassman's proposed fiscal 2020 county budget that would increase the amount of local spending for Harford County Public Schools operations or increase the property tax rate to raise more revenue for schools — despite hours of calls from Harford citizens in two public hearings last week to do both of those things to fully fund a request by the Board of Education for \$15 million more in county funding next year.

Council members did acknowledge during their legislative session Tuesday — when 10 amendments to Bill 19-009, the annual budget appropriation ordinance, were introduced — the many concerns people have expressed over education funding in the preceding weeks.

Council President Patrick Vincenti noted the roughly 80 speakers, whom he said were "extremely passionate at expressing their thoughts and concerns" during public hearings May 9 and May 16 in the council chambers in Bel Air.

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Restaurateur's newest offering up 'cravable' food

Barrett's on the Pike restaurant opening Tuesday in Bel Air shopping center

By ERIKA BUTLER
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John J. Barrett Jr.'s philosophy when it comes to running his restaurants is "let them win and run up the score," and that philosophy will be applied at the new Barrett's on the Pike, set to open Tuesday.

"We're here to show the care and concern that doesn't exist in the market," Paul Silbermann, general manager of the new Bel Air restaurant, said. "We hire great people that do care."

Barrett's on the Pike, the third for the restaurant group that owns Barrett's in Hunt Valley and Glyndon Grill near Reisterstown, is opening in the former Stone's Cove Kit Bar, which closed suddenly in June 2017.



Barrett's on the Pike is set to open Tuesday in Bel Air Town Center. It will be the third restaurant for John E. Barrett Jr., but his first in Harford County.

ERIKA BUTLER/THE AEGIS

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MATT BUTTON/THE AEGIS

Howard Eakes, Assistant Supervisor of Science at Harford County Public Schools, back, joins a group of students as they enjoy some time outdoors exploring the new storybook trail at Deerfield Elementary School in Edgewood Wednesday afternoon.

TRAIL

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at the grand opening, noting that they are “really excited about sharing this with them.”

Eighth-grader Amirah Ferguson, 13, said she and her classmates “had a lot of fun” with the project, writing letters and obtaining funding, and later working in the EHS wood shop.

“We wanted to bring excitement, something fun to the younger kids,” said Ferguson.

She described “Where The Wild Things” as “a good story” and “a good movie.” The book, published in 1963, was adapted into a movie directed by Spike Jonze and released in 2009.

“I feel like it was good,” her classmate, 14-year-old Colby Guest, said of the trail. “I feel like we should do more things like this.”

Guest and Ferguson both said they attended Deerfield Elementary as children. Ferguson said the school is “really a piece of my heart.”

Ferguson also discussed how the trail gives children an opportunity to get outside and read a print book, during an era when books can be read on smartphones or other electronic devices — she said she knows kindergartners who have iPhones.

“I feel like this is their time to be kids and be outside and have fun,” Ferguson said. “I like living in the moment, and I think people should learn to love the moment and be connected to [their] surroundings.”

COUNCIL

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“We want to thank for taking the time to come and talk with us,” Vincenti said. “We want to especially thank you for your respect and your courteous manner here at the chambers.”

Hundreds of people participated in a rally in downtown Bel Air before the May 9 public hearing, calling for the council to “FundIt5” and increase local funding for Harford County Public Schools as school officials have proposed cutting multiple teaching and administrative positions to help balance the proposed \$472.7 million HCPSS operating budget for next year.

Glassman has, in his proposed \$903.6 million county budget for fiscal 2020, allocated \$256.4 million for public schools, a \$10.7 million increase over the current year’s funding. The state also increased its funding for Harford schools by several million dollars, and more money is expected to be available through the state’s Kirwan Commission.

Those who spoke at the public hearings, including students, teachers, parents, school principals, union leaders and school board members, urged the council to shift money from unspent cash reserves elsewhere in the county budget, or raise property tax rates to generate additional revenue.

Nancy Reynolds, an eight-year school board member who has served as the board’s president and vice president, said at the May 16 hearing that citizens have made the message clear, “they want to live in a county that promotes education and values quality education.”

“The school system has done their part — the time is now, you have no option, in my mind, other than to fully fund this budget,” Reynolds said. “Our kids deserve it.”

Councilman Andre Johnson said Tuesday that the public showing is “what democracy looks like.”

He appreciated the community coming out, and committing in force and really telling us exactly what’s important to them,” he said.

Council Resolution 008-19, which was introduced April 16 and was one of the subjects of the public hearings in May, keeps county property tax rates the same next year, however.

Budget amendments

The council introduced 10 amendments to the budget appropriation ordinance, the majority related to school capital projects.

Amendment 1 clears the school system to spend \$1.5 million, which had been appropriated in prior fiscal years, on engineering and design for systemic renovations to Joppatowne High School. The school has not had any “major upgrades” since it was built in 1972, according to county budget documents.

Amendment 3 reduces the allocation for improvements to HCPSS’ three swimming pools from \$705,000 to \$120,000. Kim Spence, chief of budget and management research, told council members that school officials want to conduct an assessment before they determine how they will prioritize pool renovations, thus less funding is needed for that project next year.

Amendment 7 establishes a line item of \$842,000 — the combination of \$585,000 school officials want to spend in 2020 and another \$257,000 from relocatable classrooms — for improvements to special education facilities.

Billy Boniface, director of administration for Glassman, lauded school system officials for working with the county government on the capital project funding changes, noting their efforts to “remain budget neutral” and “not bring in new funding.”

“We were able to take [existing capital] projects that had balances available,” Boniface said.

The 10th amendment introduced Tuesday involves removing \$150,000 from the park and recreation department’s proposed budget that would be used for a contract with Multicorp to provide maintenance services at county recreation facilities rather than county personnel.

Councilman Robert Wagner sponsored the amendment along with Johnson. Wagner said it came about after “much discussion” during an April 29 council work session on parks and recreation funding. Director Kathy Barley said the department would use contractors at the Chenoweth Activity Center in Fallston starting in early May as caretaker positions became vacant.

“Many times the people that our public first encounters are people that are there, watching over the building or cleaning the building,” Wagner said Tuesday. “I don’t think that contractor will be able to answer and direct [to] do the general public a service that we see out of our dedicated personnel that we’ve got there working for us today.”

RESTAURANT

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The Harford County Liquor Control Board approved the liquor license Wednesday for the new restaurant, which will have soft-openings without alcohol on Friday and a VIP event Saturday before opening to the public on Tuesday.

Barrett’s on the Pike will be open 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday; 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Fridays; 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. on Saturdays; and 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday.

Barrett and a business partner saw an opportunity about a decade ago in the former Graystone Grille in Hunt Valley. “They bought it, changed the name, changed the decor and the name,” Silberman said.

It opened as Barrett’s Grille nine years ago. Two years later, they opened Glyndon Grille.

With Silberman living in Bel Air, Barrett began looking for a space in Harford County, with the idea that Silberman would be the GM.

“There’s nothing like us up here,” Silberman said. “We really want to bring upgraded service with cravable, delicious food. Many do one or the other, but I’ve not seen them put together.”

He described the menu as classic American fare, served fresh with handcut steaks and seafood and soups and salad dressings made in-house.

“Our focus is fresh food, we like Maryland food,” Silberman told the liquor board at its meeting Wednesday.

People from Harford County go to Barrett’s in Hunt Valley, he’s hoping people make Barrett’s on the Pike a destination, too.

The restaurant was pretty much gutted when Barrett took over. The former space had dark wood and a dark red paint — the new space is bright white with a strong dark blue.

It has two private rooms — one with a long, narrow table to seat 20 and the other with six round tables to seat 40 — and a separate bar. The main dining area is off the open kitchen, “so everyone can see what’s going on,” Silberman said.

Formerly the general manager at Barrett’s, Silberman is working five minutes from home, not 40, time he’ll be able to spend in the restaurant.

“Working five minutes from home is great. I feel like so many people here what they want, what they expect,” he said. “It’s going to be fun to be able to serve my neighbors.”

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