

Wednesday, April 21, 2010

## **Trachtenberg will try to save police substation**

### **East County board meeting highlighted importance, she said**

by Jeanette Der Bedrosian | Staff Writer

After initially telling the East County Citizens Advisory Board that county police substations were unlikely to be saved, Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg (D-At Large) now says she will fight to keep the Briggs Chaney site open in fiscal 2011.

The substation, located in the complex with the Eastern Montgomery Regional Services Center, is a place where residents can go to file police reports or ask police questions, and officers can fill out paperwork, eat meals or take care of other office business. More importantly, Trachtenberg and board members said it's a visible presence in an area that has experienced some crime issues.

In County Executive Isiah Leggett's proposed budget, the roughly \$115,000 needed to operate four substations in Montgomery County is not easily available, Trachtenberg has said. At the East County board meeting, she said putting funding back in the budget would necessitate cuts elsewhere.

Trachtenberg stands by this statement but said she recognized after the meeting how important the substation was to East County residents.

"We're not in a situation where we can just freely add things to the reconciliation list," she said. "But what's really clear is that people in East County are really concerned about the loss of this substation."

She sent a letter last week informing the board she had discussed the issue with Councilmember Phil Andrews (D-Dist. 3), who is the chair of the Public Safety Committee, and they agreed to lobby to keep the station open.

"He agrees with me that this is an important public-safety resource in the East County and we will work together to see that the facility remains open," she wrote.

Lt. Stephen D'Ovidio, deputy district commander for Briggs Chaney and White Oak, said though he will support whatever decision is made, he believes the substation is an important asset to the community.

"I do feel like the Briggs Chaney station is a valuable community resource, and if the decision is made to keep it open, you know, I'd be very happy," he said. "But whatever happens, I support the decision made by the county executive, the council and the chief of police."

Trachtenberg said she sent the letter after visiting the substation site and hearing from board members about the safety concerns surrounding Briggs Chaney and Castle Boulevard. While the board seemed to have come to terms with reduced staffing in the regional services center and other cutbacks, she said she saw that nobody was willing to back down on the substation.

The Long Branch substation is another site Trachtenberg said she will try to keep in operation. Over the past couple months, she said she's traveled to community boards and groups to have honest discussions with residents about how to handle the budget crisis. Through it all, she said she's stood by one principle. A

"I've always been a firm believer that priorities, especially in lean times, need to be centered around the needs of the people in the community," she said. "Our resources need to be based on the people."