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## ***Council OKs tax credit for biotech firms***

### **Pedestrian bridge postponed over budget questions**

County News | Erin Cunningham

The Montgomery County Council created a tax credit Tuesday for biotechnology companies, but council members say they are unsure whether the county has enough money to provide the tax credits now.

Councilman Michael J. Knapp (D-Dist. 2) of Germantown, who sponsored the legislation creating the tax credit, said now that the legislation has been approved, the council could consider funding it this year or when the budget situation improves.

The council is expected to take up Montgomery County Executive Isiah Leggett's (D) proposed fiscal 2011 budget in the next few weeks.

The bill calls for \$2 million in tax credits, which would supplement the state biotechnology investment incentive tax credit in Montgomery County firms.

The county would have flexibility in how much the credit would be.

Knapp said Tuesday that adding to the state's tax credit will motivate companies that are moving out of the county to stay in Montgomery County — or locate here.

Tuesday's vote was 7-2 with council members Philip M. Andrews (D-Dist. 3) of Gaithersburg and Marc Elrich (D-At large) of Takoma Park opposed.

The legislation makes Montgomery County the nation's only local jurisdiction to provide a biotechnology tax credit, according to a news release.

It was a recommendation of the county's Biosciences Task Force, which formed in 2008.

Elrich said Tuesday that perhaps the council should consider offering the tax credit to firms that are not already receiving the state credit.

"This money would be more valuable [if it went to] those firms that got nothing," Elrich said. "Not those that already got a credit from the state."

Andrews said he was opposed to the credit because the county does not have the money to fund it.

However, Councilwoman Nancy Navarro (D-Dist. 4) of Silver Spring said the biotechnology tax credit is one way the county can begin to expand the county's tax base and generate more revenue.

"I think that is not a panacea, but it's a step in the right direction," she said.

## Council tables

### foot bridge conversation

A discussion over a \$1.6 million bridge, which was postponed during the council's March 9 meeting, likely won't continue until the council takes up the operating budget, officials said Tuesday.

The discussion was postponed by Council President Nancy M. Floreen (D-At large) of Garrett Park after some council members questioned why spending on the bridge to the Long Branch Library had grown from \$1 million when it was first proposed four years ago.

Elrich said the bridge originally was intended as a pedestrian passageway, but enhanced standards have caused the project — and the cost — to grow.

The proposed bridge is 10 feet wide and 170 feet long, according to Roylene Roberts, chief of neighborhood revitalization. She said a 374-foot-long blacktop trail also is included in the plans.

The bridge discussion was part of a larger conversation on County Executive Isiah Leggett's (D) proposed capital budget, which includes \$3.9 billion in funding for capital projects in fiscal years 2011-2016.

## Golden Shovel Awards

Floreen will accept nominations for Golden Shovel Awards through March 26.

The awards will honor residents who went "above and beyond" to help their neighbors shovel the snow that fell during the winter season, according to a press release.

Nominations must be mailed or e-mailed by the end of the day March 26. Awards will be presented at a council session in April.

Nominations can be made online, or can be mailed to Golden Shovel Nominee, Montgomery County Council Award, 100 Maryland Ave., Rockville, MD 20850. E-mailed nominations can be sent to [councilmember.floreen@montgomerycountymd.gov](mailto:councilmember.floreen@montgomerycountymd.gov).