WHAT WE'RE WORKING ON

ONLINE THURSDAY

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COMING THURSDAY

A taxpayer-funded Baltimore project remains unfinished years after it was supposed to open. Now **city officials tell Spotlight on Maryland** they don't know its status.

THE BALTIMORE SUN

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Howard Police add Tasers after LaMorie killing

But family says the move isn't enough

By Matthew Wynn

Eight months after Howard County Police shot and killed an autistic man who had called 911 for help, the department has doubled the number of officers carrying Tasers and expanded training on how to respond to people in crisis.

But the man's family says that isn't enough. And police won't say whether they've changed how officers respond to mental health emergencies, whether crisis intervention training is mandatory or when all officers will complete it — leaving key questions unanswered about the department's efforts to prevent another death, even as a county task force recommends sweeping changes to that response.

Alex LaMorie, 25, was shot by three officers March 1 outside Patuxent Commons, a Columbia apartment complex with units set aside for adults with disabilities. He had called 911 to report that someone online was extorting him, then made suicidal statements. Officers found him in the parking lot holding a knife.

None of the officers had a Taser that night, according to a federal lawsuit LaMorie's family filed Oct. 29.

Since the shooting, Howard County has equipped about 300 officers with Tasers, including every officer at the rank of sergeant and below in a public-facing unit. Nearly 80% of officers have completed crisis intervention training, and the county has formed a task force to examine its response to people with disabilities in crisis.

LaMorie's family says

Turn to TASERS, *Page 2*

THE INTERVIEW JARI VILLANUEVA



Jari Villanueva, who spent 23 years as a bugler with the U.S. Air Force says he's still moved emotionally by playing taps on Veterans Day. **KARL MERTON FERRON/STAFF**

The 24 simple notes of taps still move military bugler

By Jonathan M. Pitts

Twenty-four notes. Barely a minute of music. No words.

Yet few melodies can summon as much emotion as taps, the haunting bugle call that has accompanied generations of soldiers to their graves. Jari Villanueva has spent much of his life trying to understand why.

Born in Finland and raised in East Baltimore, Villanueva graduated from Patterson High School and the Peabody Conservatory before joining the U.S. Air Force Band in 1985. During 23 years of service, he played at more than 5,000 ceremonies at Arlington National Cemetery.

Along the way, he became one of America's foremost authorities on taps. A longtime Catonsville resident, he's co-founder and president of Taps for Veterans, a nonprofit providing live buglers for military funerals. With Veterans Day approaching, Villanueva discussed the history of taps and its emotional power.

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- Carroll County commits to solving homelessness among its veterans. **Page 7**
- What's open, what's closed on Veterans Day. **Page 10**
- 100-year-old veteran among those to be celebrated at Annapolis ceremony. **Page 10**

How did you become so closely associated with taps?

It's kind of a funny story. I became a bugler when I was a Boy Scout. I used to sound taps at the end of meetings and weekend gatherings.

Taps was part of my audition for the Air Force Band in 1985. A year or so after that, we were on a bus heading to Arlington, and the drum major asked me, out of the blue, "Where did taps come from?" And I had to say, "I don't know."

That started me researching. This was long before the Internet, of course. I got every book I could get my hands on, visited military libraries, met people involved with bugling. It turned into almost an obsession: bugles, taps and what they mean to our country.

So where did taps come from?

It originated during the Civil War, at Berkeley Plantation on the James River in Virginia, where the Union Army regrouped after the Seven Days Battles in 1862.

General Daniel Butterfield, commanding the 1st Division of the V Corps, did not like the regulation "lights-out" call. He thought it was way too formal a call to use. So he brought his brigade bugler, a private named Oliver Willcox Norton, in

Turn to TAPS, *Page 19*

SPOTLIGHT ON MARYLAND

Democrats, GOP reject claim Moore helped flip seats

Some in both parties argue that the governor's coattails were short

By Gary Collins
Spotlight on Maryland

Maryland Gov. Wes Moore has celebrated Democrats' election victories over the past week, including seats flipped in Wicomico County, pointing to an Eastern Shore breakthrough as evidence of his party's growing reach in the heavily blue state.

But according to current state election numbers, voters in that county rejected Moore himself. Again.

"Already, we have seen that we have flipped nine seats from red to blue, from Frederick to Wicomico, right?" Moore declared Nov. 4, one day after winning reelection statewide.

"I'll say the days of having a governor with no coattails, those days are over," Moore added.

Rep. Andy Harris, a Republican representing the Eastern Shore, offered a sharply different assessment Friday when Spotlight on Maryland pressed him on the governor's claims.

"If he has coattails, they were mighty short," Harris said.

Ballots continue to trickle in

The numbers complicate both politicians' arguments.

According to the Maryland State Board of Elections' unofficial returns, Moore received 14,715 votes in Wicomico, or 46.06%, compared with 15,799 votes, or 49.46%, for Republican challenger Dan Cox.

Moore lost the county again, this time by 1,084 votes.

Four years earlier, Moore also lost to Cox in Wicomico, receiving 45.79% of the vote.

Moore's share improved by just 0.27 percentage points this

Turn to FLIPS, *Page 2*



Democrat Ernest Davis defeated incumbent Wicomico County Executive Julie Giordano, a Republican. **STEVE PIERCE/SPOTLIGHT ON MARYLAND**

TRUMP WATCH

Hegseth survives House impeachment effort

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth dug in for a fight in his first news conference in months on Tuesday, arguing that he had committed none of the high crimes alleged by Kentucky Republican Rep. Thomas Massie in an impeachment proposal.

The House voted Tuesday to block an effort to impeach Hegseth over his conduct in office and handling of the war in Iran. The Pentagon chief framed the effort as an indictment against the nation's service members.

"This is not patriotism," Hegseth said. "This is sabotage."

Hegseth said the impeachment resolution "tells our enemies — Iran, the cartels, every adversary watching — the United States will actually punish its own warriors and its own civilian leadership for successfully executing lawful military operations."



Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth speaks during a news conference at the Pentagon on Tuesday. **NATHAN HOWARD/AP**

Here are more Trump administration headlines from Tuesday:

Rural healthcare: The Department of Health and Human Services announced that it will disburse $10 billion in rural healthcare awards across all 50 states as the second installment of the $50 billion fund created last year by the One Big Beautiful Act. HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said in a statement that the funds would "improve prevention and help states build solutions that fit the needs of their own communities."

Capitol Hill GOP: Rep. Jim Jordan of Ohio won the race to serve as the chamber's Republican minority leader, and Sen. John Thune was elected Senate minority leader for the next Congress. Jordan defeated Rep. Steve Scalise of Louisiana and will lead a diminished House Republican conference as the party adjusts to losing control of the chamber for Trump's final two years in office.

— From wire and Sinclair National Desk reports

Could city services face cuts? Mayor asks agencies to review their spending.

By Brian Carlton and Chevall Pryce

Mayor Brandon Scott's administration is asking Baltimore agencies to develop budget proposals that would reduce their spending by approximately 5%, as the city faces mounting financial pressures and continues to grapple with millions of dollars in spending overruns.

The request, confirmed Tuesday by the mayor's office in response to questions from The Baltimore Sun, comes as city officials confront another difficult budget cycle. It also coincides with a City Council committee's consideration Tuesday of nearly $143 million in additional funding to cover expenses from the previous fiscal year.

The administration characterized the proposed reductions as a routine part of preparing the fiscal 2028 budget, rather than a directive to impose cuts.

"All city agencies have been tasked with evaluating their current spending to develop an early draft budget proposal that includes a recommended spending reduction of approximately 5%," a spokesperson for the mayor's office said.

The request comes just months after Baltimore adopted a roughly $5 billion

INSIDE

- Create Baltimore could lose more than $133,000 in city funding next year under a proposed 5% city budget reduction. **Page 13**

Turn to BUDGET, *Page 2*

Promotion of Miller signals appetite for fight

President Donald Trump's recent decision to name the architect of his immigration enforcement policy chief of staff signals an aggressive approach to the Democratic Congress. **Page 11**

UMD student detained by ICE faces deportation

Maria Flores Garcia, a freshman public health major, is being held in a Louisiana ICE facility, Prince George's County Executive Aisha Braveboy said in a statement. **Page 14**

Company purchases Halethorpe warehouse

VeryBest Wholesales has bought a 105,752-square-foot warehouse in Halethorpe for $11.45 million and plans to relocate its distribution operation from Jessup to Baltimore County. **Page 15**

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FLIPS

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year, even as Democrats captured the county executive's office, a House of Delegates seat and control of the county council.

One of the Democrats who won was Ernest Davis, defeating incumbent Republican County Executive Julie Giordano in a rematch that reversed their 2022 outcome.

Giordano beat Davis by 2,449 votes four years ago. This time, unofficial returns show Davis winning 16,857 to 14,940, marking a 1,917-vote margin.

Davis received 2,142 more votes than Moore on the same county ballot.

So who deserves the credit?

"People wanted to change, and that's all I could contribute that to," Davis told Spotlight on Maryland in his Salisbury driveway on Friday.

Asked whether state Democratic leaders powered his win, Davis initially said no, then identified Del. Sheree Sample-Hughes, a local Democrat, as an important supporter.

He credited his campaign staff and small-dollar local donors, not a wave generated in Annapolis.

"I don't know what he did to contribute to that," Davis said when asked about Moore's role in flipping seats.

Moore's campaign spokesperson, Carter Elliott IV, attributed more than "$1.3 million on Maryland candidates" and hosting "over 40 fundraisers for leaders across the state" as the reason for seat flips.

"Gov. Moore put in the work, time and resources to make sure Maryland was elected commonsense leaders across the state to continue record drops in violent crime, keep building on a five-year high in reading and math scores, and double down on growing our economy," Elliott said.

Not every Democratic winner agrees

Democrat Josh Hastings, who unseated Republican Del. Barry Beauchamp in District 38B, credited neighborhood organizing and a message focused on everyday concerns.

Hastings won 7,566 votes to Beauchamp's 5,130, garnering nearly 60% of the vote.

"All of that happened largely because of ground game," Hastings said.

But Hastings also defended Moore's involvement, citing campaign contributions, repeat visits and a rally in Salisbury.

"Not only financial contributions. He's been here," Hastings said. He suggested Davis might not have won without the governor's support.

The internal brawl

Meanwhile, Harris said Republicans themselves were to blame in Wicomico County as part of the reason for his party's failures last Tuesday.

"The bottom line: Wicomico County had infighting in the Republican Party," Harris said. "That was to blame."

Spotlight on Maryland previously reported last summer about a bitter dispute between Giordano and Republican Sheriff Mike Lewis involving allegations over sexually explicit images and correspondence between their offices.

Giordano denied sending inappropriate photographs to deputies and called the allegations false.

In correspondence disclosed after a public records fight with Spotlight on Maryland, Lewis challenged Giordano's account that his office didn't have written correspondence about the alleged sexually explicit photographs.

Ultimately, after Spotlight on Maryland reported on the internal fight between the county leaders and threatened an imminent public records lawsuit, Giordano called a last-minute press conference to address the allegation and then released documents showing that a series of letters about the allegations did exist.

Lewis, meanwhile, won reelection with 17,020 votes, making him Maryland's longest-serving sheriff.

Giordano did not respond to repeated interview requests Thursday and Friday.

Beyond infighting, Harris also claimed outside gambling interests spent heavily to flip Wicomico County's delegate seat.

He rejected criticism that his own leadership contributed to the setback. "Well, that's ridiculous," Harris said.

Soon after Spotlight started asking questions on election night, his wife, Maryland Republican Party Chair Nicole Beus Harris, circulated an email, polling party leaders on whether speaking to the media was acceptable.

"Due to a social media post yesterday, the MDGOP has received multiple email requests for interviews and comments on internal MDGOP business," Beus Harris wrote. "I have always felt that internal business should stay internal."

"Especially in the current climate with the unfortunate and historic blue tsunami that hit this country yesterday — I believe that showing any internal division can play into the Democrats [sic] hands and will only hurt our reputation more," Beus Harris added.

Beus Harris copied an email sent by FOX45 News political reporter Mikenzie Frost requesting an interview. She asked her members to complete a one-question survey by voting yes or no on her philosophy.

"We have to build a better relationship with the public, not become the drama in the news," Beus Harris wrote. "Do you agree?"

Beus Harris, through her spokesperson, declined Spotlight on Maryland's interview request, saying her party leadership "agreed" with her that it "was not appropriate or productive" to speak to the media.

Her husband, Rep. Harris, also lost Wicomico, receiving 15,219 votes to Democrat Dan Schwartz's 16,894, although Harris won reelection across his congressional district.

The congressman also faced multiple viral moments on social media during his reelection campaign, including one over a reporter's two-party consent during a press gaggle. Harris demanded that her phone be taken from her for recording before he abruptly left the room.

Elsewhere, Republicans — including state delegates Ryan Nawrocki and Kathy Szeliga — held their seats despite Democratic efforts, complicating any sweeping statewide explanation.

They and other colleagues in the Maryland Freedom Caucus were targets of Moore-aligned groups.

House Freedom Caucus Chairman Matt Morgan argued on social media that those flipped seats were Democratic-leaning districts where Republicans had previously outperformed expectations.

"Well, I guess there was an exception with the Freedom Caucus districts because we did go with what we think is 9 and 0," Morgan said.

Do you have any tips or information related to this story? Send news tips to gmcollins@sbgtv.com or contact Spotlight on Maryland's hotline at (410) 467-4670.

BUDGET

from Page 1

budget for fiscal 2027, which began July 1. That spending plan closed a projected $12 million shortfall without broad-based tax increases or cuts to core services.

The potential impact is already drawing attention from city agency leaders.

Robyn Murphy, CEO of Create Baltimore, said during her organization's quarterly board of directors meeting Tuesday that the budget process remains in its early stages and that the city's financial plan could change.

"Like all city agencies, we have been directed to prepare for a 5% budget reduction," Murphy said. "That is not the happiest of news, but the city is looking at tightening its belt. This is not specific to us."

For Create Baltimore, a 5% reduction would amount to approximately $133,539, based on the $2,670,778 the organization is scheduled to receive from the city's general fund for the current fiscal year, including funding to operate the Bromo Seltzer Arts Tower.

A year earlier, the city faced an $85 million budget gap, which officials closed through a combination of higher fees, reductions in agency spending and other cost-saving measures.

Baltimore is not alone in preparing for difficult decisions. Gov. Wes Moore's administration has asked Maryland agencies to consider reductions as the state confronts a projected fiscal 2028 structural deficit approaching $3 billion. Some state agencies have been asked to prepare proposals with reductions as large as 10%.

Ongoing financial challenges

Baltimore's financial challenges have persisted.

In September, city finance officials reported that spending in fiscal 2026 had exceeded projections by approximately $135 million. Higher-than-expected revenues of $103.8 million helped offset those costs, but left a preliminary $31.2 million shortfall relative to the city's earlier projections.

The overruns were particularly significant in agencies responsible for essential city services.

On Tuesday, the City Council's Budget and Appropriations Committee took up supplemental funding requests totaling $142.75 million to balance fiscal 2026 expenses. They included $88 million for snow removal, $30 million for the Fire Department, $22 million for the Police Department and $2.75 million for the Sheriff's Office.

The fire and police shortfalls were driven partly by overtime and vehicle maintenance expenses, while the Fire Department also faced costs associated with implementing a union agreement.

The requests highlight the difficulty city officials face in controlling expenses, particularly in departments where staffing, public safety responsibilities and unpredictable emergencies can drive spending beyond initial budgets.

Baltimore's longer-term financial outlook has also raised concerns.

A financial forecast included in the city's fiscal 2026 budget projected that operating expenses would grow by an average of 3.6% annually over the following decade, compared with revenue growth of 2.4%. That forecast projected a $66.3 million gap between revenues and expenditures in fiscal 2028 before any corrective measures.

The estimate predates the latest budget, but illustrates the structural pressures confronting the administration.

Reductions may not be adopted

On Tuesday, the mayor's office emphasized that asking agencies to evaluate potential cuts does not mean those reductions will necessarily be adopted.

"The requirement that each agency conduct an independent review of their own anticipated budget and the various factors that may affect it, including the consideration of reductions, is a standard practice," the spokesperson said.

The administration described the early review as an "informational tool" intended to give agencies time to establish their fiscal and strategic priorities before formal budget deadlines.

Mary McCauley contributed to this report.

Have a news tip? Contact Brian Carlton at bcarlton@baltsun.com or on X at @DogPatchNomad. Contact Chevall Pryce at cpryce@baltsun.com.

TASERS

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those measures fall short. Their attorney calls his death "a systemic failure."

The lawsuit names Howard County and officers Joel Rodriguez, Cody Bostic and Pfc. Joseph Riebau. It alleges violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act, plus negligence and wrongful death.

In July, the Maryland Attorney General's Office declined to charge the officers with any crime.

Jamie Strawbridge, an attorney for LaMorie's family, said it shouldn't have taken "Alex's killing" for the county to purchase additional Tasers. Though he said it is "a step in the right direction," it should have happened "many years ago," and buying more Tasers isn't enough.

The training is an "important first step," Strawbridge said, but it is "critical to make sure officers are remembering and implementing" it.

Theron L. Bowman, CEO of the Bowman Group, who worked on the Baltimore Police Monitoring Team, said a Taser "possibly" could have saved LaMorie's life, but there's no way to know. Because LaMorie was holding a weapon, officers even with a Taser "might reasonably conclude that deadly force is necessary to protect themselves or others," he said.



Jamie Strawbridge, an attorney with Brown, Goldstein & Levy, discusses details of the lawsuit filed by Alex LaMorie's family.. MATTHEW WYNN/STAFF

"The presence of a Taser doesn't mean anything if an agency doesn't have a policy and practice of emphasizing de-escalation and of using the least amount of force required to successfully conclude a situation," Bowman said.

He said he was encouraged that Howard County is looking at ways to give officers better information about people with disabilities before they arrive. "It's not just about adding another tool to an officer's options," he said. "It's about making sure the entire organization is committed to using every reasonable opportunity to preserve life."

After LaMorie's killing, County Executive Calvin Ball said the county had begun reviewing its "Critical Incident Training."

In May, Ball created a task force to recommend changes to how the county responds to people with disabilities in crisis. Howard County said Tuesday that the task force had submitted its final report, with four priorities and 15 detailed recommendations.

The task force recommended embedding the county's mobile crisis team in 911 dispatch around the clock, with "increased capacity during overnight hours." It also called for developing response models "that require mental health professionals over police" and for requiring "less-lethal tools, training and clear use-of-force policies."

It recommended mandating "ongoing collaborative disability and behavioral health training" for police, fire and EMS personnel and the mobile crisis team, as well as "transparent data collection and public reporting." A subgroup would monitor whether the county carries out the recommendations.

"As this work moves forward, two things are essential: continued commitment from the next administration to fully implement the recommendations, and meaningful leadership and oversight by people with disabilities throughout that process," said Melissa Rosenberg, executive director of the Autism Society of Maryland, which co-chaired the task force.

The term-limited Ball is leaving office this month and will be replaced by Vanessa Atterbeary in December.

The police department's fiscal 2027 budget also calls for continuing to expand Mental Health First Aid training to all sworn officers, based on the International Association of Chiefs of Police's One Mind Campaign.

Howard County officers and dispatchers take a 40-hour crisis intervention course, which the department runs with the National Alliance on Mental Illness and Grassroots Crisis Intervention Center. It covers de-escalation, active listening and "how to more effectively and safely interact with individuals who have autism and other intellectual and developmental disabilities," police spokesperson Sherry Llewellyn said.

Chief Gregory Der, who retired in June, required in 2023 that every recruit academy class train on Tasers before graduating, the department said in April.

Have a news tip? Contact Matthew Wynn at mwynn@baltsun.com.

TODAY IN HISTORY

Associated Press

On Nov. 11, 1918, fighting in World War I ended as the Allies and Germany signed an armistice aboard a railroad car in the Forest of Compiègne in northern France.

Also on this date:

In 1620, 41 Pilgrims aboard the Mayflower, anchored off Massachusetts, signed the Mayflower Compact, creating a local government for the colony that called for a "civil body politick, for our better ordering and preservation."

In 1831, Nat Turner, an enslaved man who led dozens of followers in a bloody revolt in Virginia that resulted in nearly 60 deaths, was executed by hanging. Although authorities quickly quelled the uprising, Turner evaded capture for several weeks before being captured.

In 1921, the remains of an unidentified American service member were interred in a Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington National Cemetery in a ceremony presided over by President Warren G. Harding.

In 1926, the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads launched the nation's first federal highway system, marking the official start of famed Route 66, which first stretched from Chicago to Los Angeles but later spanned the entire country.

In 1938, Irish-born cook Mary Mallon, who'd gained notoriety as the disease-carrying "Typhoid Mary" blamed for the deaths of three people, died on North Brother Island in New York's East River at age 69 after 23 years of mandatory quarantine.

In 1987, following the failure of two Supreme Court nominations, President Ronald Reagan announced his choice of Judge Anthony M. Kennedy, who went on to win confirmation.

In 2022, Sam Bankman-Fried's FTX crypto exchange platform filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection amid a collapse of its assets; Bankman-Fried was convicted in November 2023 of seven counts of wire fraud and conspiracy to commit fraud and was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

CORRECTIONS | The Baltimore Sun is committed to providing fair and accurate coverage. Readers who have concerns or comments are encouraged to call us at 800-829-8000. An article in Tuesday's edition about a Veterans Day vehicle program run by Heritage MileOne Autogroup and Vehicles for Change misstated that veterans received free cars. Recipients pay about $900 to $1,200 for the donated vehicles through a 12-month financing arrangement meant to help them build credit. The Sun regrets the error.

LOTTERY | For updated lottery numbers, go to **baltimoresun.com/lottery.**

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