

## Vicki Almond – The disconnect between Campaign Rhetoric and Actions

*prepared by Save Baltimore County 2018*

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The following chart compares Ms. Almond’s record as County Councilperson with her complete verbatim answers to questions asked on a variety of issues. Video of the forums can be viewed on the YouTube Channel “Save Baltimore County 2018.”

Save Baltimore County are community members and activists who want better government in Baltimore County.

Issue	Words/Legislation	Actions
<b>Transparency, fairness and openness in government</b>	<b>On Campaign Contributions and availability to the voters</b>	
	<b>From the 11/19/17 interview with the Towson Flyer:</b> Developers give you money. And the reason they give you money is not to get you to do what they want you to do (I'm sure some of them are hopeful,) they give you money to have access. They give you money because they think you're the best person for the job and they think you're the person who's going to say, 'Oh Hi, <u>Mr.</u> So and So, give you an appointment next week!' They want access to the public servant, they want to be able, just like you call me up and say I really need to come in to talk to you about whatever. And I say "Sure, any time next week."	
	<b>From 2/13/18 Candidate Forum at the Central Baltimore County Democratic Club:</b> “I immersed myself in that diversity (of my district) because I wanted to know everyone in my community. I wanted to know what made them tick and I wanted to be part of their lives. I wanted them to be able to call me, e-mail me, write me, it didn’t matter what the issue was, I wanted to help solve <u>it</u> . But I knew too that in wanting to do that I needed them to be a part of the solution. So to me it’s all about building those relationships. It’s about team work it’s about coming together to solve the really tough problems. And to me today. we’ve got some really tough problems.	Vicki refused to meet with constituents before the 8/8/17 vote on Resolution 68-17. Instead her aide sent out e-mails such as this one: Pat, Thank you for contacting the Office of Councilwoman Vicki Almond. I enjoyed talking with you last week. We are still waiting to see how this process develops in the next couple of weeks. However, to say that Councilman Marks has not flip-flopped on this issue is completely inaccurate. He has altered his position multiple times over the last several years. I think even the Councilman would have to recognize that he has been involved in this process for several years and has told his colleagues that he was in favor of the PUD over the years since the initial contract was agreed to with his understanding of what was planned in the future. Only Councilman Marks could have introduced the PUD as it is in his district. If he was opposed to a gas station he simply did not have to introduce the PUD with a “fuel service station” included and there never would have been an issue in the first place. Regardless of how we got to this position, we are where we are. Councilwoman Almond appreciates hearing from you and will definitely take your views into consideration. Sincerely, Jonathan Schwartz Senior Council Assistant Councilwoman Vicki Almond Baltimore County, 2nd District
<b>From the 3/19/18 WYPR appearance on Midday</b> (at 21 minutes) a caller asks: “Should the amount of campaign contributions have any bearing whatsoever on so called ‘access’ to politicians and if not, why did you make a statement that it does?” Ms. Almond responded, “I would like to start off by saying that everyone has access to me now as the councilperson and they would have access to me as the County Executive.”		

	<p><b>From the 4/14/18 debate at Morning Star Baptist Church:</b> “No one on the county council is involved in pay-to-play. In 2012 I made a zoning decision in Owings Mills. And the zoning decision I made was to bring Foundry Row to Owings Mills, which was the development of an old solo cup factory. And during that time I was approached by people who have supported me along the way and asked me and told me not to do that development. That they didn’t want it. And I persevered because I knew it was the right thing, All my community associations bought in to foundry row. They wanted it. And I said it could come. Pay to play is not in Baltimore County. Everyone at this table take donations from all kinds of people. It is not pay to play. People invest in candidates because they want their candidate of choice to win. And we are not a pay-to-play system. There’s nothing there that needs to be fixed.”</p>	<p>While the most community groups supported the development of Foundry row, there were citizen opponents who formed “Say No to Solo Coalition”. Developers of the Metro Center opposed Foundry Row as competition for their retail. Kimco was concerned about the impact on the Owings Mill Mall, which they were planning to redevelop due to it’s decline. The opposing developer started a petition drive to put the matter to the voters in a referendum, but the county elections board rejected that appeal. This was really a fight between developers, and Vicki sided with Greenburg Gibbons in that fight. <a href="http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-04-18/news/bs-md-co-solo-farewell-20130418_1_foundry-row-solo-cup-owings-mills-mall">http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2013-04-18/news/bs-md-co-solo-farewell-20130418_1_foundry-row-solo-cup-owings-mills-mall</a></p>
	<p><b>On Blindsiding the Community</b></p> <p><b>From 11/19/17 interview with the Towson Flyer:</b> “I think its surprises that people in communities definitely do not like. They want certainty, they want to know what’s going on.”</p>	<p>1. Vicki voted in favor of \$43 million forward financing and grant package after only 2 weeks notice from the County Executive. The community complained about the short notice and lack of ability to review the deal to no avail.</p> <p><b>From her 3/19/18 interview on WYPR’s Midday</b> “I didn’t want to se a hole, a black hole, sit there for the next five or ten years. I think it’s important to get it done and move forward. I think we’re doing it in the best possible way and the most effective and efficient way as we can as a council.” She goes on the say, “We do believe after seeing the plans that the new developer brought in, that this is going to be a great piece of Towson. We’ve been doing Towson piecemeal for quite a bit of time. We just need to get it done.”</p> <p>2. Vicki voted to table David Marks’ Resolution 68-17 modifying the Towson Station PUD to remove gas. This completely blindsided the community who had been calling her office asking what her vote would be on the Resolution. In an interview with the Towson Flyer 11/19/17 Ms. Almond says, "And one of the things we were told was that there was a compromise and a negotiation in the works. We were told that as Council people, that give us a shot here, we are talking to the community; we are going to fix this. And I have to tell you that any time I think there's a chance for compromise or negotiation, I want to let it happen." If she thought the community was involved in these talks, didn’t she wonder why they were still clamoring to talk to her? We were repeatedly told she hadn’t made up her mind and “something might happen.” It seems clear that Vicki had inside information about back room talks with</p>

		<p>the developer that she did not share with the community.</p> <p>3. Vicki co-signed a letter with other County Council members to the County Executive withdrawing support for a new DHS after publicly congratulating DHS on Facebook when KK announced DHS would get a new school rather than a renovation.</p> <p>4. From the Save Historic Woodbrook Cottage Facebook Page: Councilwoman Almond introduced a bill a few weeks ago adding the cottage to the Final Landmarks list and at 9am Thursday morning, before the 10am council vote- She introduced an amendment which removed the Woodbrook Cottage from the Landmarks list.</p>
<p><b>On Transparency and Ethics in Government</b></p>		
<p><b>From Vicki's website:</b> Vicki has worked to restore people's trust in county government. Through several pieces of legislation, she banned campaign contributions during the CZMP process, mandated ethics training, fought to live stream Council work sessions, and championed pension reform. Vicki has and will continue to implement good policy designed to hold government officials accountable for their actions, while setting a high standard of conduct in Baltimore County.</p>		
	<p><b>Bill No. 35-17 Public Ethics – Ethics Training From the 7/3/17 County Council Meeting:</b> “This bill implements ethics training for key decision makers in County government in County government. With more and more County officials crossing the lines of acceptable behavior, this is a necessary step to ensure Baltimore County Government is operating in a respectable manner.”</p>	<p>A weak bill that didn't include ethics training for the county executive and includes no penalty for County employees that don't attend training. When challenged on the lack of effectiveness of the bill, Vicki responded, “the problem isn't with unethical behavior, it's the appearance of unethical behavior.”</p>
	<p><b>From the 2/12/2018 Candidates Forum at the Cnetral Democratic Club:</b> “The transparency in Baltimore County is not good.”</p>	
	<p><b>Bill No. 39-17 County Council</b> for the purpose of requiring work session meetings to be held in the evening sponsored by Wade Kach</p>	<p>Voted against with no comment at the County Council meeting.</p>
	<p><b>Bill No. 40-17 County Budget</b> for the purpose of requiring the County Executive to hold at least 2 public meetings prior to the submission to the County Council of the annual proposed budget sponsored by Wade Kach</p>	<p>Voted against this bill with no comment on 7/3/17. Every other Council Member gave testimony for or against this bill. Councilman Kach introduced the exact same bill in March of 2018 and Vicki voted for the bill. On March 19, 2018 Vicki posted on her Facebook page: “This evening I was proud to support legislation requiring future County Executives to hold two public budget hearings, prior to introducing the budget to the Council. This is another step towards ensuring #BaltimoreCounty government is open and accessible.”</p>
	<p><b>Bill 47-17</b> Revises pension policy that allows “double-dipping” by County employees. Of the controversy amongst freshman County Council members in 2010 over the original legislation she said, “As a group, we talked about it and didn't</p>	<p>An editorial in the Baltimore Sun by David Plymyer dings Vicki for "closing the barn door long after the horses have gone. Ms. Almond's bill accomplishes nothing of value because she waited far too long to act. Specifically, she waited until after the primary beneficiaries of the controversial 2010 bill that created the pension windfall, including County Executive Kevin Kamenetz, had legally vested in the benefits</p>

	<p>quite understand the extent of it,” said Almond. Almond, who is considering a run for county executive, said sponsoring a bill to change the pensions fits with her goals to promote transparency and fairness in government.  <a href="http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-county/bs-md-co-pension-bill-20170801-story.html">http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/maryland/baltimore-county/bs-md-co-pension-bill-20170801-story.html</a></p>	<p>created by the bill. By waiting so long, Ms. Almond assured that the windfall could not be taken away from Mr. Kamenetz and the other high-ranking county officials. Are we to believe that was not her intent?”  <a href="http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/readersrespond/bs-ed-rr-pension-20170907-story.html">http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/readersrespond/bs-ed-rr-pension-20170907-story.html</a></p>
	<p>When Councilman Kach raised concerns over 4 members appointed to the Charter Review Commission in 2017, Vicki defends her appointment saying he is an “ethical person”.</p>	<p>Vicki Almond’s Charter Commission Appointee was John Gontrum, an attorney with Whiteford, Taylor and Preston on retainer for developers with issues before the Council. Mr. Gontrum consistently fought to keep the status quo in the Charter indicating that the County is running smoothly and needs no changes.</p>
<b>Community</b>	<b>On Land Use Decisions that go against the wishes of the communities they adjoin</b>	
	<p><b>From 2/13/18 Candidate Forum at the Central Baltimore County Democratic Club:</b>  “Communities are the backbone of Baltimore County. They always have been and I think they always will be. And we were all about making our communities stronger.”</p>	<p><b>Land Use votes and actions against communities:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. 27 Hooks Lane upzoning - In 2012 VA changed the zoning on the “house” at 27 Hooks Lane (near the Greene Tree Road intersection – the stone and wood house close to Vito’s restaurant) from “office- residential” use to “business retail” use. The nearby intersection is heavily congested and increased retail use will cause accidents and other major inconvenience and costs to the county/citizens. Her zoning change was against the expressed wishes of the communities.</li> <li>2. 2016: Commerce Center upzoning (where Ruths’ Chris is located) at the very intersection of Hooks Lane and Greene Tree Road. Here VA changed part of the zone to the highest allowed retail to allow Commerce Centre to build two (2) 20,000 square - foot floors (totaling 40,000 square feet) of office space atop its parking deck. Commerce Centre has only one entrance and no exit onto Reisterstown Road (its address is 1777 Reisterstown Rd) and both an exit and entrance onto Hooks at Greene Tree. This was against the wishes of the communities.</li> <li>3. In 2016, VA gave the “house” (that had the elephant statue on its parking lot) at 1830 Reisterstown Rd (across from Trader Joe’s) zoning to allow for a palm reader business.</li> <li>4. 2016: Reversed her 2012 downzoning position on Chestnut Ridge County Club from 9 building lots to 40 building lots interrupting an appeals process that was not complete.  <a href="https://www.bayjournal.com/article/baltimores_most_elegant_new_community_not_fit_for_a_fish">https://www.bayjournal.com/article/baltimores_most_elegant_new_community_not_fit_for_a_fish</a></li> <li>5. There is a set of Baltimore County “Guidelines” for improving the Reisterstown Road Commercial Corridor from the City Line to the Beltway. They are titled as the Pikesville Commercial Revitalization Guidelines. They have not been carried out. This corridor is supposed to have a “Village feel and look.” County officials avoid these guidelines when they want to help particular constituents. In complete disregard for the spirit of those guidelines, Ms. Almond gave a used car dealer zoning for a used car lot at</li> </ol>

- the corner of Reisterstown Road and Milford Mill Rd (Slade Ave.- next to the BP gas station). VA also allowed signage at "Fields Pharmacy" which is now an auto parts supply store that does not comply with the "guidelines."
6. Woodholme Country Club upzoning: This concerns a 225.57 acre parcel of land owned by the Woodholme Country Club. Councilwoman Almond put this Issue in for Woodholme Country Club. She did this as a favor at the Club's request after the filing period expired for the Club to file this on its own. Of the 225.57 acres, 223.47 are zoned DR 1 (one dwelling unit per acre). The county is recommending that roughly 40 of those acres be changed to DR 3.5 (three and a half dwelling units per acre). This theoretically allows 324 dwelling units instead of 225 dwelling units on the parcel. Among other reasons, the additional burden on Mt. Wilson Lane would be unreasonable. Ultimately, 40.94 acres were rezoned to allow 153 townhomes. Two-weeks later the Country Club held a fundraiser for Ms. Almond and two members of the board of directors thanked Vicki for her help.
  7. 2016 upzoning for Wawa hypermart next door to Garrison Forest school
  8. Extended the Community Revitalization District to a residential area before completing a study of the Pikesville CRD guidelines
  9. CZMP issue 2-036: 600 Reisterstown Rd: PCC filed this issue. In the 2012 CZMP Councilwomen Almond granted "upzoning" to this property against PCC's wishes. The zoning was changed from BL to BM (Business Major-large scale commercial). This is the tall "office" building at the northwest corner of Reisterstown Rd and Millford Mill Rd. It is the "tallest" building in Pikesville. The owner came to the county with a plan to change the exterior, and make other improvements, which, as you can see, has not been done. PCC's position is that Councilwoman Almond, via the Council, should change the zoning back to BL – zoning that is proper for all of the commercial corridor from the beltway to the city line. We are asking Ms. Almond to undo what she has done. (change was not made by VA)
- Alan Zuckerberg wrote an op-ed about some of the land uses issues in items 1-8 that was published in the Baltimore Sun on 6/30/2017*  
<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/readersrespond/bs-ed-rr-developers-20170630-story.html> Pikesville Communities Corporation (PCC) wrote a letter on 8/16/16 detailing CZMP issues in Vicki's district and their position on each issue. The letter can be found here: <http://pikesvillecc.org/CZMP2016/CZMP-letter-may-2016.pdf>
10. Towson Station PUD - voted to begin review process in 12/2016 claiming councilmanic courtesy then voted to table Resolution to remove gas breaking councilmanic courtesy to allow a "negotiation" process with the developer. The community was in a terrible bargaining position with the developer due to an unknown contract extension executed prior to commencement of negotiations. Vicki's final vote opposing the amended contract with CVP came safely after 4 "yes" votes already guaranteed the

		<p>developer would get what they wanted. She made no statements about why she voted against the contract amendment. Citizens raised many concerns about the deceptive valuation of the tax credit granted to the developer and the lack of protections for the County in the amended contract.</p> <p>11. Bare Hills/Village of Lake Roland – six stories, 150 apartments, 50,000SF retail, 4 story parking garage. The PUD was withdrawn after a neighborhood association negotiated a covenant agreement, but many in the community and nearby felt the negotiations did not represent them. Baltimore Sun article 7/11/17 VA says, “I have been listening to both sides, and I really asked everyone to take a step back and kind of regroup,” Almond said. “It’s a matter of coming to some kind of compromise where we can have a good development with community support.”</p>
	<p><b>On Schools</b></p> <p><b>From her website:</b> Vicki voted to approve record County education spending for Baltimore County Public Schools and advocated for 100% of Northwest area schools to have air conditioning. She championed a Community Eligibility Pilot Program (CEP) in Baltimore County Public Schools, which provides impoverished children breakfast and lunch at school—improving behavior, attendance and ability to learn. Vicki will fight to expand opportunity and reduce poverty by expanding Pre-K and putting CEP in every Baltimore County School that needs it.</p>	<p>Great Schools is one of the three legs of Vicki’s platform. However, she sent letter to KK denying planning money for a new Dulaney High School after sending congratulations to DHS a few months prior after funding was announced.</p> <p><b>At the 2/13/18 BCCDC Forum</b> Vicki made a variety of contradictory statements defending the letter including: “I’m not supporting either one of them (THS or DHS) because I think we need to take a step back.” “I want us to put this all on the table and figure out how we’re going to get you your new school, but we’ve got to put the brakes on for now. It can’t just happen. And I’m sorry but the present administration, they don’t have any idea how they are going to pay for it. They’re going to put planning money in this year’s budget and in 2019 they’re going to walk away and go, ‘Oh well.’” “I know you need a new high school.” “Let’s not wait until 2019. Let’s figure out how we’re going to do this: can we get more bond money? Can we get more money from the state? Can we borrow more money? Let’s figure out what we can do to solve this problem. Not just let it wait another five years or ten years because that’s not the way to do it. But we have to figure out the proper way to do it. And we’re going to have to borrow more money and if we have to do that, I say do it. Let’s just get this done. Let’s build Dulaney. Let’s build Towson. Let’s take care of the other schools that we’ve got to take care of and bit the bullet because otherwise this is going to continue forever and ever and ever.”</p>
	<p><b>On Historic Preservation</b></p>	<p>Voted to deny landmark status to Woodbrook Cottage against he County Historian and LPC recommendation <a href="https://www.facebook.com/savethewoodbrookcottage/">https://www.facebook.com/savethewoodbrookcottage/</a></p>
	<p><b>On legislation regulating Hyper-Marts</b></p>	<p><b>Bill 87-16 Convenience Stores:</b> sponsored by Marks, Quirk, Almond and Jones: This bill was written to accommodate the advent of Hypermarkets – high volume gas/convenience stores. There is nothing in the nature of Hypermarkets that would require or advise a weakening of current zoning to allow them to be located adjacent to residential properties. But this is what the legislation does. Where before, a fuel service station was permitted provided that no part of the lot was within 100 feet of a</p>

		<p>residentially zoned property, the new legislation states that the fuel servicing spaces cannot be within 100 feet of a residential property. Because high volume gas stations are shown to have an increased negative impact on air quality, GTA would expect this land use to be kept farther from residences, not closer. This change can only be in the interest of developers such as Royal Farms and Wawa and to the detriment of homeowners. Instead of regressive legislation, this bill could have been written to protect vulnerable populations from the negative impact on air quality documented at high volume fueling stations such as schools, parks, elderly housing and hospitals. All over Baltimore County, communities are fighting encroachment from these Hypermarts on their homes, schools and parks. This bill paved the way for them to proceed.</p>
<p><b>Equity and Environment</b></p>	<p><b>On Open Space Waiver Fees</b></p>	
	<p><b>From her 3/19/18 interview on WYPR's Midday:</b>          "I'm very committed to balance as far as our growth goes, whether it's commercial, whether it's residential, whatever it may be. It has to be balanced. Do we need more green space, absolutely we do. And we can do that. I think it's a matter of holding people accountable when we are building, when we are developing. Let's put these amenities into the plan. And really let's make a serious...that we want green space; we want walking paths; we want bike paths; and we need to make make that a part of the project."</p>	<p><b>Bill 73-16 Open Space and subsequent amendments in Bill 83-16:</b>          NeighborSpace has been advocating for reforms to the Local Open Space manual for years. They were completely blindsided by the giveaway to developers that appeared in a bill introduced by Vicki Almond and David Marks that also happened to address their concerns. <b><i>Through this legislation, developers that do not provide the required amount of local open space in their developments can reduce their fees by deducting 60% of the cost of private amenities and 100% of public amenities that they provide from their fee.</i></b> For instance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the entire costs of benches they install along the sidewalks can be deducted from their fees.</li> <li>• 60% of the pool they provide for use by the tenants of their apartment can be reduced as well.</li> </ul> <p>While this bill has some improvements to previous Local Open Space requirements, it is clear that developers will use this legislation to avoid most, if not their entire obligation to pay a waiver fee for portions of the LOS requirement they cannot accommodate on their development sites.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><i>The cost of providing market driven private amenities should never be deducted from open space fees as private amenities do not benefit the general public.</i></b></li> <li>• Any intent of this bill to incentivize developers to provide on or off-site public LOS is undermined by the ability to pay a reduced fee. Developers will pay fees rather than perform the service when given the option.</li> <li>• One of the few concessions made to the GTA in Bill 73-16 required LOS design, layout and cost estimates at the concept plan stage. Bill 83-16 sponsored only by Councilwoman Almond delays submission and public review of this information until the development plan submission. This is a theme with development interests: delay review until later phases minimizing public input and so that changes and redesign will be deemed too burdensome.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>On Governor O'Malley's Stormwater Remediation Fees</b></p> <p><b>From her 3/19/18 interview on WYPR's Midday:</b> The County Council along with Vicki Almond repealed the storm water tax in 2016,</p>	

	<p><b>From her 3/19/18 interview on WYPR's Midday:</b>          "One of the reasons that we repealed that fee is that we didn't feel like it was doing what it was supposed to do. It was putting more of a burden on our business folks and some of our homeowners than it was supposed to. I think that will be probably be revisited at some point, but the way it was set up at the time I do not think it was a benefit for my constituents or my business community."</p>	<p>The County Council along with Vicki Almond repealed the storm water tax in 2016, but has done nothing to replace that revenue source or carry out storm water remediation work.</p>
<p><b>On protecting sensitive land from overdevelopment inside and outside the URDL</b></p>		
	<p>In 2012 Vicki Almond heard the evidence that too much development would degrade Dipping Pond Run to such a degree that trout would no longer be supported. She refused all but 9 lots from a 100 lot development proposal for a zoning change on the Chestnut Ridge Country Club.</p>	<p>2016: Reversed her 2012 downzoning position on Chestnut Ridge County Club from 9 building lots to 40 building lots interrupting an appeals process that was incomplete to the benefit of the developer and the demise of trout in Dipping Pond Run.  <a href="https://www.bayjournal.com/article/baltimores_most_elegant_new_community_not_fit_for_a_fish">https://www.bayjournal.com/article/baltimores_most_elegant_new_community_not_fit_for_a_fish</a></p>
	<p><b>From the Baltimore Sun Voter's Guide:</b> "I am a strong advocate for maintaining the URDL, and protecting the rural land outside of the URDL while focusing development and growth in the appropriate areas inside the URDL. In order to have strong communities, Baltimore County must offer residents the amenities they crave, however it is important to focus those amenities in designated areas. I believe that our zoning policies and our Urban-Rural Demarcation Line serve our needs and accomplish those goals when implemented correctly."</p>	<p>Bill 37-17 Baltimore County Bill 37-17 was intended to support the solar industry and achieve Maryland's solar energy goals by allowing utility-scale solar plants on resource conservation zoned property with a special exception. Resource conservation is some of the most restrictive zoning in Baltimore County because the area contains the most environmentally sensitive land in the county. In contrast, legislation in Carroll and Harford Counties allows utility-scale solar only on industrial lands. Solar energy production is allowed on farmland only as an accessory use, i.e. on rooftops of outbuildings to serve the energy needs of the farm. Anne Arundel County recently instituted a moratorium after initially allowing solar on farmland. The unintended consequence of these efforts has resulted in a land rush for prime and productive agricultural land in Northern Baltimore County to achieve renewable energy goals for the state of Maryland. Wade Kach introduced several bills intended to highly restrict utility-scale solar on prime and productive ag land until the council had more comprehensive understanding of what has worked and has not worked in other Maryland counties and states. Each time, the Council defeated the proposed bills. There are no utility-scale solar facilities planned for Vicki Almond's councilmanic district.</p> <p>A table comparing the safeguards for the land in Mr Kach's legislation vs. Ms. Almond's can be found here:</p>