

Notes from Hillside, February 2026

On February 12, 2026, the CA Board of Directors held a meeting at CA Headquarters. At this meeting, the CA Board voted on the much-discussed Splash Pad proposal, passed the FY2027 Operating and Capital budgets, and approved several easements.

Splash Pad

Before I get into the voting at the CA Board, I want to thank all the Wilde Lake residents for providing context and insight on this issue. During the first six weeks of this year, I have either texted, emailed, talked on the phone or met in person with over 100 Wilde Lake residents to discuss the splash pad proposal. Working mostly in the evening and on weekends, you have provided important context and insights on both the importance of Bryant Woods Pool to the community and feedback on the splash pad proposal.

By the time I took my seat at the CA Board meeting, I had a very clear view from Wilde Lake residents. The Bryant Woods Pool site is a poor selection for a splash pad. The topography and parking (everyone mentioned the parking), were the reasons most often mentioned. However, only a handful of residents were completely opposed to a splashpad anywhere in Columbia. A majority of residents did find the idea of a neighborhood amenity that did not require a membership appealing. Although it was said in several different ways, a lot of Wilde Lake residents said a splash pad, “would be an interesting addition to the city, as long as the people that live where it is located support having the splash pad in their neighborhood.” Many of these residents also said they would bring their kids or grandkids to the splash pad, if it was built.

Armed with this knowledge, I felt well prepared for the discussion and vote at the CA Board Meeting. Our discussion was fairly short, and I did my best to share with the board the views of Wilde Lake residents. When the question was called, I voted against the splash pad proposal. I was joined by two other CA Board members that had pools in their villages identified in the December 2025 presentation (Long Reach and Oakland Mills). The River

Hill member joined us in voting against the proposal. However, this was not enough to carry the day, and the Splash Pad project passed by a close 5-4 vote.

Next Steps

It is important to understand what was approved at the February 12, 2026 meeting.

To be absolutely clear, this project is for the construction of one splash pad.

For the remainder of the calendar year, CA will conduct community outreach in each Columbia Village. CA staff will provide additional information about splash pads and other amenities that could be co-located next to the splash pad. CA staff is hopeful that the residents of one Village will want to see the splash pad located in one of their neighborhoods. Once a site is determined, CA will engage further to fine tune the amenities located on the site. The timeline for construction is not well defined, but could begin as early as Spring 2027.

One last thing: During our discussion, one CA Board member commented said, “I have to be honest, the pools that we are targeting, Bryant Woods, Talbott Springs, and Jeffers Hill all sit in less advantaged neighborhoods than the other pools.” I did not speak up at the meeting, but I was a bit offended by the characterization that the Bryant Woods Pool is in a “less advantaged neighborhood.” And yes, we do have owners and renters of modest means that live in close proximity to Bryant Woods Pool. In addition, the most expensive houses in Wilde Lake are equally close to the Bryant Woods Pool. What I am saying here is that Bryant Woods Pool sits at the center of the neighborhood. Not a poor neighborhood, not a rich neighborhood, but one where we all live together, regardless of economic condition.

FY2027 Budgets Passed

The CA FY2027 Operating and Capital budgets were passed at the meeting. Although there were some last minute requests to reallocate funds within the budget, the final vote was to pass the budget as presented. Wilde Lake residents can look forward to Running Brook Pool pump house improvements and ADA compliance projects at the pool.

Easements

Occasionally, the CA Board is asked to evaluate and make a decision on easements for work on CA property. Most often, these are utility easements that do not generate much fuss. The easements considered at the February 12, 2026 meeting were:

- Extending a stormwater drain under a path in Harpers Choice
- Traffic calming improvements on Cradlerock Way in Owen Brown
- Bicycle pathway improvement adjacent to the Middle Patuxent River area.

Of these easements, I am excited for the bicycle pathway improvements. This is a County project to provide an additional US 29 crossing (the path will cross under US 29) for those that bike/walk around town. The County is responsible for the construction and maintenance of the pathway, so look to the HoCo Department of Transportation for details.

The next CA Board meeting is February 22, 2026. If you wish to participate in resident speakout, please remember to sign up on the CA website before COB on February 21, 2026.