

Bill would address foreclosure blight

By DANIELLE E. GAINES
dgaines@newspost.com

ANNAPOLIS — A house on East Fourth Street in Frederick that has been in disrepair for the last nine years — with broken windows and doors, and weeds growing from cracks in its brick facade — was highlighted in a House committee hearing on Tuesday.

The city of Frederick has is-

sued 11 notices of violations for the property since 2007, said Zachary J. Kershner, the city's director of public works.

Today, the problems still persist, in part because it is unclear to the city who can be compelled to make repairs.

"The property is still in some unclear state of foreclosure," and the state's property tax database still shows the previous owner,

Kershner said.

A bill introduced by Delegate Carol L. Krimm, D-District 3A, aims to require lending institutions to take earlier responsibility for properties in foreclosure.

Right now, state law requires lenders and secured parties to register with the state's Foreclosed Property Registry and assume maintenance of properties after the foreclosure sale is final and the

deed is recorded.

"The problem is that when the bank takes the property from the property owner, there could be many years before a sale actually occurs," Kershner said.

Krimm's bill seeks to have secured parties registered when they first file a foreclosure action. It also allows local governments to impose a \$1,000 penalty if secured parties fail to register, and expands

the ability of local governments to take care of nuisances on foreclosed properties and adding those costs to the tax bill.

"This has been a problem in our city for quite some time ... and it has been very stressful on our code enforcement and our budget in our city," Krimm said.

The bill is supported by

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Staff photo by Dan Gross

Frederick Human Relations Committee Chairwoman Angela Spencer speaks Tuesday at a Black History Month celebration with, from left, Frederick County Council President Bud Otis, Rep. John Delaney, D-6th, and County Executive Jan Gardner.

GIVING RECOGNITION

Black History Month event honors county's African-American community, leaders

By LINDSAY POWERS
lpowers@newspost.com

Frederick County and city officials gathered with others Tuesday to recognize Black History Month and highlight the importance of the African-American community in the county, said County Executive Jan Gardner.

The event featured a few speakers, including U.S. Rep. John Delaney, and a joint city and county proclamation marking February as Black History Month to acknowledge African-American citizens and their contributions. The event was slated for earlier in the month but was rescheduled because of bad weather.

Delaney, D-6th, said that Black History Month is an important time to celebrate "those champions who have done so much to not only change the trajectory of African-Americans in this country but in their actions and through their

deeds give us example of some of the finer moments in American history."

He continued that despite progress made, "too many" African-Americans are struggling with economic hardships. In addition to being a celebration, he said, the monthlong observance is "also a time to remember what we have to continue to do so that their lessons will not only sustain us ... but give us the ambition to overcome some of the biases and barriers and obstacles that still exist."

Delaney also read a congressional citation directed to Frederick County citizens in celebration of Black History Month. County Council President Bud Otis and Frederick city Alderwoman Donna Kuzemchak read the proclamation from the county and city.

"Closer to home, we certainly want to recognize the importance of a number of African-American leaders who've made a difference in our

community," Gardner said after referencing several nationally recognized historical figures.

Gardner pointed to several African-American men and women known for their roles and contributions to the local community. Among others, she named Dr. Ulysses Grant Bourne, one of the first African-American physicians in the area, and Lord Nickens, a civil rights advocate and former leader of the Frederick County branch of the NAACP who died in 2013.

People in her younger generation have "truly been privileged" compared with African-American men and women who faced racial discrimination in the past, said Angela Spencer, chairwoman of the Frederick County Human Relations Commission. She said that "it has not been that long ago that changes have been made for people who look like me." People should

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Students use senses to explore the alphabet

By LINDSAY POWERS
lpowers@newspost.com

Cathleen Rogers sat Tuesday in front of roughly 38 kindergartners at Parkway Elementary School in Frederick who, as a group, called out their responses to the lesson.

Looking at a picture of a snake, the students said the name of the letter "s," the word "snake," and the sound the letter makes: "Ssssssss." As they spoke, they traced the shape of the letter with their fingers in the air. One student went up to the board and located the shape of the letter in the picture of the snake using a clear, plastic card with an S written on it.

Rogers is the author of "Can You Find the ABCs?," a book that aims to help children learn the alphabet and letter sounds. She worked with Parkway's two kindergarten classes Tuesday morning with the same techniques used in her book to go over lower-case letters.

The self-published book — available at www.abcnana.com — is aimed primarily at kindergartners, first-graders who are having trouble learning the alphabet, English-language learners and special education students, said Rogers, who lives in the Frederick area. Her hope is to reach as many schools and teachers as she can, seeing the book as a supplemental tool that can be used in the classroom.

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Staff photo by Dan Gross

Kindergartner Lexie Bowden, center, traces a letter of the alphabet with her finger with the help of children's book author Cathleen Rogers on Tuesday at Parkway Elementary School.

Man charged with sex offense against second girl

By NANCY LAVIN
nlavin@newspost.com

A Frederick man recently charged with raping a 13-year-old girl now faces a second set of charges in connection with a separate sexual act with a different girl, according to doc-

uments filed in Frederick County District Court.

William Misael Torres Flores, 18, of the 1300 block of Pear Tree Court, was arrested Thursday on charges of second-degree rape and child porn film in sex act. Documents from the Frederick Po-

lice Department reveal the charges stem from an incident in October in which Torres Flores had sex with a 13-year-old girl and filmed it.

The charges come on the heels of a separate set of charges against Torres Flores after a 13-year-old

girl said he raped her in December.

Torres Flores was arrested by Frederick police on Feb. 12, according to charging documents for that arrest. He was charged in that case with second-degree rape, second- and fourth-degree sex of-

fense and second-degree assault, *The Frederick News-Post* has reported.

As part of the police investigation, detectives obtained a warrant to search Torres Flores' cellphone. A video found on the phone depicting a girl having sex with Torres Flores in

a wooded area in Frederick led to the second set of charges.

In an interview this month with Frederick Detective Matthew Irons, Torres Flores said he had consensual sex with the

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U.S. SENATE RACE

Kefalas wants to help small businesses grow

By MIKE PERSLEY
mpersley@newspost.com

Chrys Kefalas learned early on what it means to run a business. His family, immigrants from Greece, has owned Costas Inn, a seafood restaurant and crabhouse in Dundalk, since 1971.

Growing up, Kefalas said, he saw his family put in endless hours of hard work as they struggled to pay additional costs to comply with federal and state regulations. They'd of-

ten pay those costs only to find out that the regulations had changed and they'd have to invest more money to comply with a new set of rules.

Kefalas said he quickly learned that his family, and others like his, would be better off if the government got out of their way and let them try to succeed on their own. The money his family spent on tax-



es and regulations could have been invested in paying employees or expanding the business.

Kefalas, 36, of Baltimore, is one of 14 Republican candidates running this year for U.S. Senate, trying to replace retiring Democratic Sen. Barbara Mikulski. His opponents are Chris Chaffee, Sean P. Connor, Richard Douglas, John Graziani,

Greg Holmes, Joseph Hoove, Mark McNicholas, Lynn Richardson, Anthony Seda, Richard Shawver, state Delegate Kathy Szeliga, Dave Wallace and Garry Thomas Yarrington.

Kefalas is on leave from his job as vice president of the National Association of Manufacturers, the nation's largest manufacturing industrial trade association, which represents 11,000 small and large manufacturing companies in the United States. He has also served as an adviser to

(See KEFALAS A6)



Kefalas