

HCCA Board Meeting Minutes: 2 February 2016

Attendees: Stu Kohn, Brian England, Lisa Markovitz, Paul Verchinski, JD Smith, Jacquie Sentell, Howard Johnson and Alan Schneider. Guests: Bill McCormack, Ginny Thomas and John McMahan.

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM.
2. The treasurer's report was approved.
3. It was noted that the minutes of the January meeting had been approved.
4. Questions and concerns were expressed regarding County Council Bill CB12-2016 introduced last night at the request of County Executive Allan Kittleman. Legislative testimony is scheduled for February 16th. The proposed bill would reorganize the Executive Branch transferring certain functions currently performed by the Department of Housing and Community Development to the Department of Citizen Services; creating a new Office of Housing and Community Partnerships within the Department of Citizen Services; correcting the positions that are appointed by certain appointing authorities; amending the duties and responsibilities of certain offices, and other changes.

Speculation exists regarding how citizens would be better served by the restructuring. Are there any improvements in decision making standards and criteria? Improvement on housing decisions would be helpful. Citizens are concerned about housing decisions. Current decisions may not include analysis of important factors, and include planning for long range risks and consequences. Housing studies may be in conflict with current decisions. Citizens are concerned about affordable housing, the location of subsidize housing, any cost/benefit analysis, and accountability for the process. Factors should include long range countywide planning, funding to upgrade existing communities, and a plan for rehabilitation to preserve basic concepts. Adequate public notice is essential, fair public hearings are vital, and the ability to appeal is fundamental. Communities must be part of planning and housing decisions.

Other communities and individuals have questions and concerns. What criteria are used for County purchases or investment in projects? Stu Kohn recommended reaching out to Allan Kittleman and the County Council members for more information. Communities need to know what is happening.

5. Affordable Housing in Downtown Columbia is scheduled for a Pre-submission meeting on Saturday, February 13 at Howard County Community College. Several issues are of concern including the details of the agreement, a cost/benefit analysis of the agreement with Howard Hughes, the criteria and responsibility for building affordable housing downtown, the timetable, and its fit into Howard County's General Plan. HCCA may testify.
6. It was noted that the Bill to amend the Watershed Protection and Restoration Fee, CB52-2015 was tabled.
7. HCCA will partner with the League of Women Voters for to support a Forum for Candidates for the School Board to be held at Howard County Community College on March 19, 2016.
8. Paul Verchinsky reported on planning for the Longevity Forum to be held on Saturday, April 16 from 1:30 to 4:30 PM. There will be three panels by age group. Meetings with the Office of Aging and others will be held in the coming weeks.
9. It was noted that the Interim BRX/BR Development Act, CB55-2015, was passed unanimously. The Act provides that for one year the Department of Planning and Zoning shall not accept applications, nor the Planning Board make recommendations, regarding rezoning applications to the BRX or BR floating zones. This bill responded to the Greater Highland Crossroads Association (GHCA) Town Hall meeting with

Council Members. The GHCA and attendees at the Town Hall meeting unanimously requested that the Highland Crossroads be removed from the BRX zone. The BRX zone exponentially increased the commercial zone surrounding the historic crossroads, and was inconsistent with successful past practices permitting community input into land use and site development.

10. Lisa Markovitz discussed the School Board transparency issues. Citizens are substantially excluded from attending and participating at School Board meetings. The School Board does not comply with the intent of the Public Information Act.

HCCA is a member of the Marylanders for Open Government coalition which is tracking compliance with the Public Information Act, and which coalition supports amendments to facilitate compliance with the PIA.

11. Lisa Markovitz and Stu Kohn are members of the Adequate Public Housing Ordinance Task Force. The 21st meeting of the APFO Task Force will be held next week. The Task Force report is due the first week in April. The ordinance limits development for a period of time based on school capacity and the adequacy of other infrastructure to support population growth. Lisa, Stu and others have proposed that to maintain our quality of life that the calculation of infrastructure to support additional growth also include planning and budgeting for police, fire, hospital, transportation and health care. Despite majority support for such recommendations, motions to include such recommendations have failed because a two thirds vote is required. Of the 22 members only 17 attended the last meeting.

12. HCCA supports and commends Howard County's decision to relocate the Planning Board meetings to the Banneker Room to permit video televised hearings.

13. On February 11th HCCA will speak at the Howard County Delegation hearing at the Banneker Room to express citizens' concerns and support for proposed legislation. There will be testimony requesting legislation regulating Merriweather Noise. HCCA supports legislation that would require more notice and study before hospitals can close. Closure of the Laurel Hospital will most likely affect the Howard County Hospital.

14. Board meetings are regularly scheduled on the first Tuesday of the month. The next meeting is on March 1, 2016.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 PM.