

To Council

From :Lisa Markovitz for HCCA

7/16/13

Testimony

I had to sign up online for an amendment, even though I am more concerned with Comp zoning in general, and new zones that have been added. So I signed up for the amendment that referenced adding proposals after the December 2012 deadline. I am opposed to accepting map amendments after the deadline. There was plenty of notice for property owners to make proposals, and no reason to extend that deadline as adding map amendments with so much less notice than the others isn't fair to the public.

However, more importantly, the Howard County Citizens Association and I strongly believe that Council Bill 32 should not pass, and a new bill, adding all the amendments should be introduced upon your return from recess. This will give more time for public hearings, especially on all the substantive amendments and the text amendments, and more work session time overall. Comprehensive Rezoning is not done often, and its ramifications will affect the County for a very long time.

This bill has for consideration 175 map amendments supported by DPZ

34 map amendments not supported by DPZ

52 pending amendments

61 text amendments including 3 whole new zones and 37 zoning type changes.

That's over 300 zoning changes. We realize some are small changes, some are large, some are extremely far-reaching with major affects in the future. We also understand how much work all this is for you. I feel sorry for a Council sitting during Comp zoning. There are lots of extra hours. The concern here is that the number of hours in past and future planned work sessions alone, where deliberation can be made on these over 300 zoning changes, amounts to minutes per change.

I have listened to the work sessions and commend you all for what appears to be a real effort to be careful with these changes, and have heard efforts made to try to make sure what is written is what is meant in some cases. That level of detail and concern needs to be applied to all the proposals, and it just isn't possible with two months given to you.

This bill was introduced such that your entire August session was lopped off the available time you could have to pass this bill, six days lost for the 65 day lifespan and 31 days lost if you extended it to a 95 day lifespan. This bill being introduced in early June made it impossible for you to be able to look at what came in, with added later amendments, and add more time. Given the sheer number of changes, this bill should be reintroduced.

The new zones alone increase residential density a great deal and should have been afforded the time given to the public to work with staff and the Council to develop community-supported amendments such as was done with CEF. They were not.

Also, we would be happy to hear more information and requirements set down in work sessions attached to granted zones where developers are charged more impact fees for their new zones to assist with improving infrastructure to accommodate new density. It should not be left as someone else's problem to fix, after the fact, when adding density, to broaden roads, or schools, and other public services.

There are already over 10,000 residential units being added to the County in the pipeline with existing zoning. * Comp zoning changes could add over another 5,000 and the upcoming discussions about New Town could add thousands more. More discussions and deliberations about how infrastructure is going to support all this needs to happen.

The public wants more time also. Recently, Marsha was quoted in the paper as being surprised that concerns were recently voiced about farming text amendments. Yesterday, we heard testimony from citizens saying they only just learned about new zoning possibilities nearby. The way the text amendments have been publicized in one huge document with no summary of reasons for them, and the additional amendments having to be clicked on one at a time to even identify them, is not easy access for the public. It is no wonder that it takes watch groups a few months to inform the public of more details of what is happening, and then people need time to address their concerns. However, more importantly, I believe that before you all put your vote to this bill, you deserve more time in work sessions to adequately deliberate not just granting a zone or not, but what requirements should be made in return for granting it, and what community concerns might not be valid enough to say no to the zoning, but would at least warrant some compromises, right now, and don't just leave it to site planning and other staff later.

Reintroduce this bill in Sept. The new zones should be flushed out more with the community, citizens want more time to address the text amendments and the newer proposals, and you deserve more work session time before voting on such a massive piece of legislation.

Again, we thank you for your service, which I believe you should be paid more than you are paid to do. Your jobs are not part-time, not in my book. So, I am sorry I am suggesting more work be added to your very full plates, but for Comp zoning, we, and I believe I can safely say enormous numbers of other citizens also feel it is needed and worth it.

Thank you.

*Source: The Development Monitoring report dated 12/31/12 that reports building activity in the last year and is put out by the DPZ