

Testimony on CR123-2014
County Council 12/15/2014

Evening Council Chair and members of the Council

I am Howard Johnson Board Member of the HCCA and I am speaking on behalf of the HCCA board. We greatly appreciate this opportunity to present testimony on CR123-2014

It was brought to my attention by another HCCA board member that CR123 was presented to the Council as a tax relief solution to Riverwatch Elkridge LLLP for an 84 unit apartment development in lower historic Elkridge. During a Greater Elkridge Community Association meeting this past Fall a representative of the LLLP was presenting an update on the progress of the development. I was aware of the plan to provide 50% affordable housing in the development. At that time I presented the question why is the county asking you to more than triple the amount of MIHU housing limit in the current CAC zoning. He explained that without county funding incentives he could not build the development.

Riverwatch is a resident contested development in this part of the county and to see further intervention by the county to prop up this project is a great concern of the residents. HCCA's issue at hand is not the increase in affordable housing, or the dismissal of the current zoning law and dismissal of agreements negotiated in good faith between the residents and the developer. It is how the last administration and housing department will go to no end to see their plans enacted no matter how much residents protest or how unviable the project is. Developments that include the allowable amount of MIHUs defined in the current zoning laws already receive advanced allotments, and a reduced tax rate on the units.

Rental units have an expected tax revenue of 15% of the rental fee. CR123 would reduce that tax rate to 4%. This not a tax cut to the renter, it is to the owner of the rental property and only benefits that entity as the County is losing revenue annually so long as this agreement stands. We do not see how this is a win for the County if residents taxes are used to fund the project for the developer and then later there is reduced revenue collected to recoup the investment. HCCA supports lawful subsidized housing solutions as defined in the code and implementation of this housing should be applied to all districts and areas of the county. Proposals such as CR123 undermine the current code and trust residents have in our representatives to follow and enforce the code.

If CR123 is passed this sets a precedent that the county can ignore current zoning, ignore current taxation, funding laws and push an agenda that may not be supported by the residents they are there to represent. What is to keep another CR123 from being proposed to prop up an unwanted and ill-advised housing or development solution to any part of the county with our tax dollars?

HCCA is asking this resolution be dismissed or at the minimum tabled until the new administration is in a position to fully review this bill as this bill was introduced on behalf of the past administration.

Thank you for your time and consideration

Howard Johnson
HCCA board member