



Howard County Citizens Association

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The Voice Of The People of Howard County

Howard County Council

September 19, 2016

CB 65 Testimony for HCCA

Good evening

I am JD Smith, Treasurer of Howard County Citizens Association (HCCA).

HCCA supports CB 65. The purpose of this act is to allow County government time to study whether development in the Tiber-Hudson watershed needs to be further restricted. We believe, however, that the bill, itself, is too restricted. It should apply to the entire county. The water in the Tiber-Hudson watershed is contained within the larger Patapsco watershed covering portions of Baltimore City and Carroll County, with the largest portions being in Howard, Baltimore and Anne Arundel Counties. To look at Tiber-Hudson alone is short sighted. A moratorium on permitting and inspection should be issued for the entire county.

Developers have submitted more than 100 proposals to build homes, shopping centers and other developments near Ellicott City since 2001, and most applications have been approved. Officials have acknowledged the county's approach to handling stormwater runoff has been piecemeal in some parts of the county. It has been so because an overall plan and systemic approach to the issue does not exist or has not been adhered to. The approach so far is a series of tactics without an overall strategy. The unique challenge in the historic district is that stormwater management must happen outside the flood-prone area in order to help it cope with future rains.

HCCA supports the bill primarily because of the moratorium. As to the need for a study, what could possibly be learned that hasn't been learned thousands of times before? There can be no doubt that there is a relationship between development

and flooding. We don't need to study whether or why. Development removes trees and other natural vegetation that serve to reduce flow and retain water. It regrades natural contours. It replaces pervious surfaces with streets, sidewalks and roads. It invites more people. And it often occurs in the absence of adequate public facilities to support it. A report titled 2006 Watershed Restoration Action Study, prepared by DPZ for the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, found that in 2004 the Tiber-Hudson sub-watershed had the second highest percentage of impervious surface cover – 27% - than any other sub-watershed studied. In the ensuing 12 years it has possibly doubled. Technology cannot completely undo the effects of development and leave a stream hydrologically behaving as though the watershed had not been developed.

HCCA believes that more time will be required to complete a comprehensive study, much less develop a reasonable comprehensive plan. We propose that, in addition to extending to the entire county, the moratorium should be a year at least. We are curious as to how nine months was the chosen time frame. Rather than use the moratorium to study the issue in the Tiber-Hudson, use it to develop a comprehensive watershed plan for the entire county. Then follow the plan. Every project should be in service of an overall plan. Too many things are studied and too many reports are sitting on shelves gathering dust. Every project that is undertaken should start with the question, “How does this fit in with the plan?” Have definable, measurable goals and evaluate success in terms of defined outcomes instead of task force reports and unrelated projects