



HCCA

Howard County Citizens Association

Since 1961... The Voice of the People of Howard County

Date: 15 March 2021

Subject: **HCCA Testimony in Support of CB-24**

Good evening.

It is my pleasure to be presenting on behalf of the HCCA, in support of Council Bill 24 with requested amendments. Frankly it is hard to imagine a circumstance under which each and every Council member would not vote for this bill. To do otherwise would be to vote against greater transparency, Citizens can be more confident zoning decisions are not being made in response to campaign contributions or business relationships and elected officials can put to rest any innuendo or insinuation of such activity with this simple strengthening and improved timing of public ethics law requirements.

Any change in a zoning regulation **IS** a big deal, something to be taken quite seriously by our Council and Executive. A minor change requested by a property owner can have serious consequences on residents' quality of life, and a myriad of not-publicly-identified expenses to be borne by. Too often the only thing certain is a big payoff for the person making the requested change... and campaign fund(s) for those helping assure passage.

Since every change in our zoning regulations should be viewed comprehensively and in context of every other regulation, it is critical that changes be approached systematically. Zoning Regulation Amendments peck holes in the General Plan, making achievement of it's agreed upon goals unobtainable. It's particularly damaging when there's the inevitable rush of ZRA applications once the General Plan revision process has begun. CB-24 provides opportunities for ZRA applications for 9 out of 10 years, and then pauses the process. Change and mistake cases could still be considered, eliminating any hardships.

An amendment to limit the number of ZRA requests to benefit a property would be a compromise. Options could include either permit only X number of ZRAs total on any particular zone or property or only permit one every 4 or 5 years as an example.

We request that if there is any exception to the one year pause that it be permitted only under extreme circumstances determined by an independent zoning counsel.

We request an amendment to the Technical Staff Reports that would require a map of impacted properties. Eliminate the phrase "and, if feasible" from line 17 on page 2. The ability to produce maps has advanced significantly since the time Section 16.208 was originally written.

We look forward to the passage of this bill, and your favorable consideration of HCCA's requested amendments.

Thank you.

Susan Garber,
HCCA Board of Director