



HCCA

Howard County Citizens Association

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

Date: 20 September 2021

Subject: **HCCA Testimony is AGAINST CR140-143-2021**

My name is Stu Kohn and I reside in Laurel. I am the President of the Howard County Citizens Association, HCCA. We have major problems with CR140 thru 143 and request that the Council asks serious questions and receive satisfactory answers before you begin to think about voting on these Resolutions. They are as follows:

- What is the impetus of these Resolutions?
- We see that a Fiscal Impact Analysis was posted a few days ago and although not required because it is a Resolution is appreciated. We find it interesting that the Auditor's office has asked the "Office of Community Sustainability to provide additional background which omits estimates and assumptions so its fiscal impact data can be appropriately verified." They state they are "unsure whether the Administration's estimates noted above consider the \$1 payment for personal property and the \$1 payment for real property tax abatements due to the County each year." Furthermore, the Auditor's Office states, "They are unable to perform a similar analysis on the personal property tax abatements referenced in the Administration's testimony until additional information is obtained from the Office of Community Sustainability."

The HCCA strongly recommends that until such information is obtained because at this time is inconclusive these Resolutions should be tabled. We would hope the public should be permitted to testify when the Fiscal Impact Analysis has been completed.

- Why should the solar companies be given an incredible break in their Property Taxes? The Resolution states, "50% of County Real Property taxes shall be exempt, upon the condition that the Landowner pay the County \$1 per year in lieu of such exempted taxes; and for years eleven (11) through twenty (20) after the Commercial Operations Date, 25% of County Real Property taxes shall be exempt, upon the condition that the Landowner pay to the County \$1 per year in lieu of such exempted taxes"?

Please tell us why are we given away the farm? Why do the Facility Owner and Solar Company deserve a break today or in the future? Why is the County not given tax exemptions for a barber, hair stylist, grocery store owner, restaurants, or even me, etc.?

Is it fair that the Facility Owner will in addition to receiving Agricultural Preservation Funding when Solar is a commercial enterprise to replace land designated for Agricultural Preservation only to lease to Solar Companies and receives lower taxes because it's farmland? With these Resolutions they will pay \$1 a year instead of the already much lower taxes because it's a farm. How much is the County losing?

- Why should the Facility Owner be given a major break from the Commercial Operations Date through ten years (10), 100% of County personal property taxes for the Personal Property shall be exempt, upon the condition that the Facility Owner pay to the County \$1 per year in lieu of such taxes; and For years eleven (11) through twenty (20) after the Commercial Operations Date, 50% of County personal property taxes for the Personal Property shall be exempt, upon the condition that the Facility Owner pay to the County \$1 per year in lieu of such exempted taxes.
- What will be the County's formula for the Facility owner to have the County accept payments in lieu of real and personal property taxes as stated on Page 1 lines 29 thru 31?
- When will reimbursement be made by the property owner from the Agricultural Preservation Funding which they previously received and now they are being paid by the solar companies? We understand the County has invested approximately \$175 million dollars in Agricultural Preservation Program which is stellar, but it needs to be paid back now! Will you commit to ensuring that the number of acres supported by Solar on Agricultural Preservation land will immediately be paid back? You owe it to all the taxpayers and voters!

It is imperative the aforementioned questions be asked by you in the Work Session as you need to ascertain all the facts before your decision on these Resolutions. The answers to the proposed questions need to be most compelling as it is your obligation for the interest of all.

Stu Kohn
HCCA President