

CLUA, Inc.
April 23rd, 2008
7:00 pm, Perryville Library

Start: 7:05 pm End: 8:55 pm. Attendance: ~25

Guest Speaker: County Commissioner Rebecca Demmler

I knew I was going to be busy, but not how busy.

- Sworn in 11th December 2006
- Received a large briefing book
- First thing to decide was legislative requests, a carryover from the prior set of Commissioners
 - Including an Impact Fee request to the General Assembly delegation
 - There was much confusion over timelines for a response and we did not act in time. Seen as indecisive, but really it was lack of understanding of the process.
- Contrary to what you might have heard on the street, the Commissioners do get on well together ...

Duties (what takes up our time):

- A large number of departments to work with
- Mayors & Municipalities
- Various Boards and Commissions
- Various other groups, such as Upper Bay Regional Counseling
- All these groups have monthly meetings
- Other groups come in on an ad hoc basis

A frustration:

- The expectation that, as a Commissioner, I am expected by the public to know a lot of detail about a lot of things that I can't possibly know, given the breadth of our responsibilities, especially when an individual citizen has a specialist's knowledge in a specific area
- We rely on our Department Heads, who are experts in their fields
 - E.g. Budget ... we lean on the Budget Director and the Treasurer to guide us through the process
 - Last night's public meeting was a very trying experience, with a lot of negative comments
 - We have to keep all of the departments and services viable

Other Responsibilities include:

- Various special recognition events and banquets. The public takes our presence very seriously.

Inside View of the Commissioners office

Al Wein - Administrator

- Handles the agenda and acts as a go between with the Departments and the public

Vicky Rinkerman - Invaluable

- Handles a lot of the running of the Commissioners office

Pam is Al Wein's assistant

Myla is the receptionist

Every Tuesday

- Hold Work Sessions - open to the public
- Agendas are not known until the Thurs or Fri prior to the Tuesday Mtg
- Thumbnail agenda, but there is also paperwork that goes along with each item, sometimes not delivered until the meeting
- Typical attendees
 - Department Heads
 - Citizens
 - Community Groups
 - State Agencies
 - Almost always, the County Attorney

Addressing problems of individual citizens is the most rewarding part of the job.

- Wells drying up
- Speeding
- Trash
- Fish kills
- Etc.

Protocol is to go through AI, but I sometimes go directly to the Department Heads

Issues addressed by the Board since I've been a Commissioner

- Water & Sewer Plan Status Report
- Gilpin Falls
- Courthouse renovation
- Elkton West
- Proposed Code Changes
- Emergency Services
- Comp Plan Review Committee
- Nutrient Caps w. MDE
- Charlestown water & Sewer
- Delmarva Power Right of Way
- Airport proposal
- Whitaker Woods water loss
- Parks & Rec. land acquisitions
- Mill Lane crossing
- Alternate forms of gov't
- Critical Area Growth Allocation

Breaking Issues:

- Possibility of spreading Fly Ash at Stancill's on Mountain Hill Road
 - Active project
 - Combustion products from three Constellation power plants
 - Very concerned about the environmental impact
 - Will be fighting it heavily
 - Hope citizens will join us
- Possibility of spreading sludge on a farm near Perryville shelved, but two farms in the Earlville area are proceeding.
 - MDE says that their regulations supersede those of the county.

Final thoughts

- Bound by a lot of State Regulations
 - E.g. Fletchwood & Appleton options include a roundabout, traffic lights and four-way stop. Both the first two options are too costly.

Frustration

- Can we go ahead with some of our projects - everything we do requires more studies

Reflections

- When I go back to being a citizen, I won't be so vocal. There are always very good reasons why decisions are made the way they are.
- It is not easy to make changes. Need a majority of the Board to make a change
- There is a prodigious amount of stuff to know and read

The worst part of the job is the criticism from the public. No matter what we decide, someone is unhappy.

Q&A

- Given the amount of work, how can someone hold a full time job and be a Commissioner
 - Becky's preference is to go back to 3 Commissioners and make them full time - and pay them accordingly
- Is it true that decisions are made from information that comes from the work sessions
 - Yes
- Would you attend those work sessions.
 - No, I wouldn't go to the work sessions, coz. most of it is administrative. I'd go to the Department Heads
- How do the Commissioners with full time jobs accomplish their workload
 - Different work styles ... they seem to be up on the issues
- Food for thought
 - Budget ... what was wrong with doing across the board cuts at a fixed percentage, say 7%
 - Some are operating on a shoestring already
 - County Admin Office decorations - all the artwork has been donated
 - People running red lights is a big problem - but that would be a Sheriff Dept's decision
- Special Taxing District issue
 - Would Special Taxing District requests always include all the water, sewer & road infrastructure and also any other services required?
 - When a developer comes to you and wants to put in a Special Taxing District for sewer and water, is it at his discretion to ask for additional school capacity, or is it up to the Commissioners?
 - *Not sure there was an answer to this one.*
- There is a perception that the Commissioners pay more attention to the Dept of P&Z than to the Planning Commission.
 - Commissioners go on their own opinion, not necessarily on the guidance of the staff

- There is a general concern, at least in this room, that the Commissioners rely too heavily on the department heads and not on their own judgment when the decision is discretionary. That the Commissioners don't have enough time or resources to get the information.
 - On the Growth Allocation decision - we did do a lot of background work and did get answers.
- What is your relationship with the Delegation
 - On a personal level, I get along fine. Policy-wise, not always in agreement
- How can CLUA help, going forward on Code Home Rule
 - Getting a third vote "FOR"
 - Lobby the other Commissioners
 - Getting information out to the public, if successful
- Would you support televised commissioners meetings
 - Only if it would not cost too much money.
 - Suggest you contact Comm. Lockhart and pursue
- Are you at the top of the learning curve
 - I will be, after the current budget process is over.

CLUA Business Meeting:

- Treasurer's Report
 - \$2611.75 in bank. No activity since our last meeting
 - 501 C4 is underway
- General Announcements, Information
 - Code Home Rule. Bill Manlove called yesterday, following up on a letter George had written. If Becky can get two more votes, Bill will consider voting "FOR".
 - Sun Article on Ag in General Assembly
 - Special Taxing Districts
 - Critical Area Law update
 - Chesa Bay 2010 Trust Fund - we supported - got funded at \$25M
 - Report on Eastern Shore Growth
 - Paul Hughes has agreed to chair the Political Committee IF someone is willing to take over the Finance Committee
 - Joe Moore's letters to the Whig - discussion with no further action agreed
- Project on WWTP discharge reports — Rupert
 - Have been contacted by an attorney who will be hiring a summer intern to perform some due diligence on our WWTP performance, comparing permitted loads with actual measurements on the 26 permitted plants. Hopefully, the outcome will be positive. If not, one option would be to pursue a citizen's action under the provisions of the Clean Water Act.
 - This is an information item right now, but I will be approaching the Board to solicit CLUA support
- Elk Point Marina
 - Has been though TAC ... need to watch for the PC agenda
 - PC will consider Critical Area growth allocation at same time as Concept Plat
- Comp Plan committee & subcommittee report(s)
 - Water Resources
 - Moving forwards, mostly in the understanding phase
 - New element with a lot of data gathering and number crunching

- Three components - Wastewater Capacity; Drinking Water Supply and impact of land use decisions on polluted run-off to the Bay
- Wastewater Capacity and Drinking Water Supply are significant number-crunching elements, the impact of Land Use decisions on non-point source pollution is the most interesting, and at the same time the most nebulous. Since the impacts are harder to quantify.
- Land Use - Timing issue - WRE is the limiting factor on speed
 - Fruitful, amiable discussion, no decisions taken
 - Minutes on website
 - Procedural issue ... meetings are open to the public, but can't participate. But what about members of other committees
- Infrastructure & Transportation
 - Met twice
 - Extending meetings greater than one hour
 - Transportation - Tony D.
 - Need to address the Growth Area, and where it is, exactly/
- Ag, Preservation & Mining
 - Agribusiness zoning and helping farmers be profitable a key discussion point
- Econ Dev
 - Meetings are educational
 - Hearing issues and problems
 - Encourage participation from all

Other Announcements:

Good TV:

- Tonight, 11 p.m., MPT (channels 22/67): "Save Our Lands, Save Our Towns" Mike Burns says this is "the best land use program I've ever seen."
- Thursday, April 24, 9 p.m., MPT (channels 22/67): "Weary Shoreline" explores how Maryland's Critical Area Law — enacted in 1984 to limit growth along Chesapeake Bay shoreline — has instead fostered growth and community animus through its own complexity and ambiguity.

Adjournment at 8:55 pm

Next CLUA Meeting: Thursday, May 29, 7 p.m., Rising Sun Library

Guest speaker: Mary Owens, Education and Conservation Coordinator, Maryland Critical Area Commission

- Please contact Rupert if you have any specific Cecil County CAC questions you would like to have answered.