

CLUA, Inc.  
July 30<sup>th</sup>, 2008  
7:00 pm, North East Library

Start: 19:05 Attendance: 16

### **Maryland Common Cause**

- Mr. Ryan O'Donnell, Executive Director of Maryland Common Cause talked about their initiatives.  
"You stand up to be heard & sit down to be appreciated"

### **Context & Role:**

- There are 3 recognized branches of gov't: Executive, Judicial & Legislative
- There are also other pillars of society ... e.g. the free press, unions, commerce and privately organized citizens such as CLUA & Common Cause
- They fill a perceived void, to push government in certain directions
- They are completely motivated out of self-interest
- Without the citizen pillar, the recognized branches don't always do the best job.
- Need the outside orgs agitating and holding the regular forms of gov't accountable

### **Common Cause:**

- Common Cause is a non-partisan organization
- Common Cause, a membership org ... 4000 members across MD, come together to pool power
- Purpose: Reform gov't and make officials more accountable
  - Would like to take money out of politics
    - E.g., Slots. Penn National announcement that they will invest their \$ ... influence
    - Common Cause can't take a position on slots, but is interested in the amount of money involved and the imbalance in expenditures
    - Passed legislation to create an extra reporting req't for the pro & anti-slots campaigns
    - Would like zero % corp money & 100% public money
    - Can't give an advantage to those who would win or lose
  - Make decision-making transparent - Open Government
    - A lot of decisions are made behind closed doors
    - Needs to be wide open, with glass walls
    - In 2007/8 passed bipartisan Federal Bill - puts state spending on a website
      - Anti-tax groups liked it
      - ACLU & Sierra Club liked it
  - Protect Civil Liberties
    - State police used to covertly monitor citizen groups
      - Infringement of civil liberty
      - Waste of taxpayer money

### **Q&A:**

- Can you talk about LLCs
  - William Rickman - developer, created 6 subsidiary companies because businesses can give directly from their treasuries, just as individuals can.

- Each LLC can donate the max ... \$10,000 total , \$4,000 per individual; plus, ownership of LLCs not always obvious
  - Corporations aren't people too ... don't vote, should not have the right to fund campaigns
  - If a public corp, then taking shareholder value
  - Ken: per *George Will*, it is a free speech issue
    - Supreme Court just knocked down the "millionaire amendment"
  - LLCs - Diana has a listing of where the LLCs monies went
  - Need to change the law. Give more power & funding to the Ethics Commissions
- Arizona, Maine & Connecticut have Public Financing Laws
  - Qualify by raising a set amount of money, to take public money to fund the rest of their campaigns
- P&G, an Ohio company, got a ban on phosphorus in dishwashing liquid in Chesapeake Bay delayed
- Re not taking a position on slots: Common Cause does not take a position on policy issues
- How can you (Common Cause) help us.
  - If you join Common Cause you will triple the membership in Cecil County
  - Introduce me to the gentleman who owns the (anti-slots) "shark mobile"
- Have you taken a position on Term Limits?
  - No, and not sure how much good it would do. It does not affect incumbency, people just move positions
- Eight member delegation, only three live in Cecil County, and only one district is entirely in Cecil County
- How to get less gerrymandering and more competitive races?
  - Do not let the politicians draw the lines
  - The more competitive a district, the less representative it is
- It is not just politicians who are dependent on contributions, but the local papers
  - Not sure what to do about the advertizing influence on the papers
  - Paper is considering not publishing endorsement letters this election season, so would have to buy an ad.
  - Not having a voter guide this year, "not a significant election year".
- 17 of the counties have televised commissioners meetings, why can't we?
- Cecil County League of Women Voters folded (6-8 years ago)
  - All the women went to work .... Did not have any time
- Voters Guide
  - How much to print a voters guide?
  - Could Cecil County Connections be approached
  - Need an explanation of what a YES vote and a NO vote means

- E.g. Code Home Rule
  - E.g. Slots
- Common Cause 2009 Legislative Wish List
  - Public Financing for MD
  - Close the LLC loophole
  - Put new laws on misuse of public funds for such things as surveillance
  - Ethics and Transparency (make Freedom Of Information requests more easy)
  - Eliminate Corp Contributions altogether (they are illegal in 35 states)
  - What about PACs, 527s, 501 C4s?

**Business Items:**

- ~\$2700 in bank
- Membership Dues
  - Over half people who paid dues last year, have not paid this year
  - Need to send a note to members to remind them
- IRS is processing the 501(c)(4) application
- Growth Forum: Bel Air, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2008
  - Hosted by Friends of Harford
  - Presented by CBF & 1000 Friends of Maryland
  - Focus: Environmental Community's legislative agenda for the 2009 Legislative Session
    - Set Performance Standards for State & Local Comp Plans
    - Ensure enforceability of Comp Plans
    - Prioritize Capital Funding to better support development in Growth Areas
    - Better define Growth Areas
    - Monitor State Plan Development
  - Input from the audience included a suggestion that they work to make the growth areas attractive places to live and work.
- August Meeting - Tues Aug 26<sup>th</sup> in North East
  - Comp Plan Discussion - Review 4 Scenarios
- It is not too late to write to the commissioners supporting Code Home Rule. They will vote on putting it on the November ballot at their next meeting on August 5. Letters of support to Commissioner Brian Lockhart (blockhart@ccgov.org) would be especially helpful. And, please, vote in his straw poll at <http://surveycecil.org> .
  - Survey shows twice as many voting for Charter as Code Home Rule
  - Message to Brian Lockhart - that Code Home Rule does not preclude Charter
- Sharon Weygand Picnic - this Sunday from 3-7 at Kilby Cream
- CLUA Picnic - a Go for Sept 13<sup>th</sup>, Kilby Cream, Rising Sun
  - Need to meet as an Org Committee before the Picnic

Adjourn 8:25 pm