

The CLUE

Calendar of Events

Thursday, July 9, 7:00 pm

CLUA Meeting: Introducing the New Comprehensive Plan. Co-sponsored with Cecil County Young Republicans. *See story below* (Perryville Library)

Monday, July 20, 12 noon and 7 pm

Planning Commission (County Admin Building)

Tuesday, July 21, 2 pm

Board of County Commissioners (County Admin Building)

Wednesday, July 29 (time TBD)

Comprehensive Plan Citizens' Oversight Committee: *Public forum on draft new Comprehensive Plan* (County Admin Building)

In This Issue: New Comprehensive Plan (p. 1); Artesian Suit in Circuit Court (p. 2); Charter Home Rule Survey (p. 3).

Overview of New Comprehensive Plan to be Made Public

CLUA meeting on the Plan: July 9

Oversight Committee's Public Forum: July 29

On June 17, ERM, the contractor for the new Comprehensive Plan, presented an overview of the proposed plan to the Citizens Oversight Committee. The oversight committee has been responsible for supervising ERM's work and providing guidance on policy. There are a number of CLUA members on the committee. The overview is basically an executive summary of the plan—although it runs to 30 pages—and does not contain all of the documentation that will make up the final product.

The Oversight Committee has been meeting weekly since then, going over the plan section by section, and making recommendations for improvement.

The committee recently approved adding a recommendation to the plan that calls for a new county initiative on “Growth Management”, to help ensure that the designated growth areas of the county absorb the majority of new housing units. (This measure was very controversial and only narrowly passed.) One of the suggested ways to accomplish this is by limiting the number of residential building permits in any given year to a specific ratio between the growth and agricultural areas of the county.

The Comprehensive Plan still has a long way to go, and public hearings will be held at various times later this year and into 2010. Changes can be incorporated into the plan at several stages. Final approval by the Board of County Commissioners is not expected until early 2010.

The next CLUA meeting will be devoted to the draft new Comprehensive Plan. The meeting will be on Thursday, July 9, at 7 p.m. at the Perryville library. This is an important introduction to the plan that will largely shape the future of Cecil County. The meeting is being jointly sponsored with the Cecil County Young Republicans. It will enable us to understand the major points of the plan, and its pros and cons, before the county’s first public forum is held on July 29.

The current agenda for the CLUA meeting on July 9 is

- 20 minute overview of the Comp Plan process and outcome so far — Rupert
- Panel discussion, starting with opening comments down the line — Julia to moderate
- Q&A with the audience (Panel discussion & Q&A to be about 1 hr)
- 5 minute closing — what comes next — invitation to the public forum on July 29

Panelists: John Bennett, Phyllis Kilby, Owen Thorne, Carl Walbeck, and Ken Wiggins.

Be sure to be at the CLUA meeting on the 9th!

Artesian Case Argued in Circuit Court

A hearing took place on Tuesday, June 23 in the ARCA, CLUA, et al. suit against the county regarding the Artesian deal — specifically, the transfer of county-owned wastewater treatment plants in the eastern part of the county to Artesian Water Company. Judge Campen of Talbot County presided. It appeared that both sides were anxious to get to the substantive issues involved and wanted a decision as soon as possible. We expect to hear from the judge very soon.

Our attorney, Carroll Holzer, argued that state law does not permit the commissioners to transfer county-owned facilities that are still in “public use” to a private entity. The county argued that the law was actually about public *ownership*, and determining whether there was a need for the county to own the facilities was within the commissioners’ discretion.

Our motivation in bringing these actions is to prevent the northeast corner of the county, now largely rural, with productive farms and orchards, from becoming a designated growth area; and to prevent the county government from making critical and irreversible decisions like this behind closed doors, without public debate, open competition, or independent review.

County Surveys Views on Charter Home Rule

A short survey of opinions about Charter Home Rule for Cecil County is available on the county's web site at <http://www.ccgov.org/news/chartersurvey.cfm> .

The county commissioners have appointed a committee that will report back with a draft home rule charter for the county by next year, in time for a referendum on the charter as part of the 2010 election ballot. The online survey was written by Vicky Rinkerman, who is the Executive Office Administrator for the commissioners, as part of a research project for her degree work at Wilmington University.

There are a number of options for how a charter government would work, and the survey asks several questions about those options, for example, whether the County Executive should be elected or appointed, or whether the county council members should be elected at-large or from a specific district. This is a good way to get your views registered early, as the home rule plan is taking shape.

Last year, CLUA supported a referendum on Code Home Rule on the 2008 ballot, but the commissioners, after initially indicating interest and holding public hearings, failed to pass the necessary resolution. CLUA has not taken a position on charter government.

Let us hear from you! The CLUE belongs to you. We'd like to know what you have to say. What are your concerns and interests regarding Cecil Land Use? Tell us about your pet peeves, your ideas for improvement, people you'd like to praise, process suggestions, new problems identified, new opportunities arisen, or new challenges to face. Speak up, and share with us. Write to the editor at gkaplan@zoominternet.net

The Cecil Land Use Alliance newsletter is published periodically under the auspices of the Board of Directors. It is provided to all members, directors and available to the public at large. Suggestions and articles are welcome. They should be submitted to the editor by e-mail to gkaplan@zoominternet.net, or by mail to P.O. Box 215, Colora MD 21917. We encourage our readers to visit our website at <http://cecillanduse.org>

President, Julia Belknap

Vice President, Diana Broomell

Secretary, Rupert Rossetti

Treasurer, Wendy Moon