

Comments for Code Home Rule Public Hearing

George Kaplan, 410-658-0484, gkaplan@zoominternet.net

Good evening, Mr. President, commissioners, my name is George Kaplan and I am the president of the Cecil Land Use Alliance.

I thank you for starting the process to put a referendum on Code Home Rule on November's ballot, and for this opportunity to speak in support of it.

Last December, the Cecil Land Use Alliance membership adopted the following policy statement:

“CLUA believes that our current commissioner form of government, dependent as it is on action by the Maryland General Assembly for much local legislation, is not sufficiently responsive to local needs or accountable to Cecil County voters. Like our neighboring counties, we need home rule in order to be more pro-active in responding to increasing development pressures as well as in dealing with the consequences of growth. CLUA believes that Code Home Rule provides a governmental option that would be simple to implement and is most likely to be accepted by voters. We urge the Board of County Commissioners to place a referendum on Code Home Rule on the general election ballot in November; if approved by the voters, it will be in place before the end of 2008.”

CLUA members believe that home rule is basic to accountable and responsive democratic government. We believe that our elected county commissioners deserve the authority and flexibility to lead our county into an increasingly challenging future. We also believe that Cecil County citizens should hold the commissioners responsible for their actions. We are dismayed that local General Assembly members, most of whom are elected largely by people outside of Cecil County, have blocked critical legislation requested by the county commissioners and needed by the county. On the other hand, we also believe that the commissioners should not be able to use the General Assembly delegation as an excuse for inaction on important matters.

To those of our fellow citizens who are unhappy with rising property taxes — and I guess that's everybody — and who are wary of giving additional taxing authority to the commissioners, we ask them to consider what our General Assembly delegation has done

for them recently. Not only are the counties generally getting less and less state aid, but our delegation has specifically blocked Cecil County from imposing impact fees on new residential developments. As a result, over the last few years, millions of dollars — by any reasonable calculation — has been added to developers' profits rather than being applied to helping the county with the infrastructure that this new development requires. Current county taxpayers are getting stuck with the bill.

It's time to sever this unhealthy co-dependency on politicians who don't represent us, and move forward with responsive and accountable county government that *we* own. All of our neighboring counties have some form of home rule. I ask you commissioners to vote to approve the referendum on Code Home Rule, and I ask my fellow citizens to vote for it.

We have nothing to lose, and much to gain. Thank you.

Cecil Land Use Alliance
P.O. Box 215
Colora, MD 21917

<http://cecillanduse.org>