

## Code Home Rule Talking Points

- Code Home Rule is the same form of government we have now (Commissioner) only with broader authority. No new elected offices are created, no County “czar” is established, i.e. there is no County Executive. **There are no additional costs imposed by Code Home Rule which would necessitate any tax increases.**
- Present “Commissioner” form of government is only form of county gov’t. that is *not* home rule, meaning we have to get permission from our representatives in the MD General Assembly to do everything from passing noise ordinances to issuing bonds for school construction. The General Assembly is in session only four months of the year, and the majority of Cecil County’s delegates (5 of 8) do not even live in, or primarily represent, Cecil County.
- Such scattered legislative authority has resulted in “pass the buck” governance; e.g. our Commissioners blame the state delegation and vice-versa. Our commissioner-delegation relationship is a history of accusations, blame, miscommunication, political posturing, and missed opportunities.
- Unlike Charter form of home rule, Code Home Rule allows county to adopt alternate sources of revenue, either impact fees on new homes or excise taxes (but not both) and transfer taxes on property sales, instead of relying solely on current residents’ property taxes to pay for new infrastructure that comes with growth. **All other taxes prohibited unless specifically authorized by MD General Assembly.**
- Our state delegates have repeatedly blocked impact fees on developers and excise taxes on businesses as alternate revenue sources, forcing homeowners to pay for growth through property taxes.
- Two-thirds of MD counties already have either impact fees or excise taxes. See Budget and tax rates survey at: <http://www.mdcounties.org/Publications/btrsurvey.cfm>
- Cecil County property taxes were at .980 for FY2001-2006 and .960 for FY2007-2008. The state average is \$1.12 per \$100 assessment. Constant yield tax rates in Cecil County have risen from 3.06% in FY 2004, to 9.38% in FY2008. Per capita property taxes in Maryland (2005) were \$1004, Delaware \$578, Pennsylvania \$1083, DC \$1951, and Virginia was \$1110. Source: <http://www.taxfoundation.org/taxdata/show/251.html> More can be found at <http://www.mdcounties.org/>

- Revenues from impact fees are dedicated solely to new infrastructure (schools, roads, bridges, water & sewer treatment & transport). Otherwise existing homeowners forced to pay for growth through property taxes. Impact fees range from as high as \$13,493 per single dwelling in Prince Georges County to as low as \$4500 in St. Marys County
- Code Home Rule counties have authority to establish impact fees, but only for infrastructure improvements related to growth.
- If approved by voters in November Code Home Rule would go into effect almost immediately - within 30 days.
- Adoption of Code Home Rule does not preclude option of adopting Charter government in future. Charter Board could be formed next year if Commissioners so desire.
- Our country was founded on the concept of self-government. Our current form of county government dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when we were still British subjects. Home Rule for Maryland counties has been permitted since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. 15 of 23 MD Counties have adopted Home Rule (9 Charter Home Rule, 6 Code Home Rule). For Cecil County not to have self-governing authority more than 200 years after our nation's independence is archaic, undemocratic, patronizing and absurd.
- Eastern Shore neighboring counties Kent and Queen Anne's have Code Home Rule, while Harford has Charter.
- BRAC is coming! If you prefer to pay for the roads and bridges and schools and waste transport and treatment on these newcomers' behalf, then keep the status quo - VOTE AGAINST CODE HOME RULE.
- "If there is no mechanism to spread the cost of funding infrastructure to new residents, then it is crystal clear existing residents pay the entire bill."  
– Vernon Thompson, Cecil County Director of Economic Development (Cecil Whig, 3/9/2007, p.1)
- "At some point, we either need to have a new source of revenue related to growth, or raise property taxes." Bill Manlove, President, Board of Commissioners (Cecil Whig, 3/9/2007, p.1)
- "There's no easy solution. If people don't want anything to change, taxes are going up, or there'll be cut services." Josh Brown, former Chair Planning Commission [current position??] (Cecil Whig, 3/9/2007, p.4)
- If we can't get an impact fee, we can't get taxes and fees to where people think it's reasonable. We can't lower property taxes unless we raise the

tax base.” Wayne Tome, County Commissioner (Cecil Whig, 3/9/2007, p.4)

— Mike Burns