

BONUS DENSITY

At the time the bonus density provision was written, it was seen as a way to encourage clustering in the NAR and SAR. Unfortunately, the comprehensive plan does not provide for strictly agricultural zoning, but includes residential housing in the ag areas. There is no reason that the ordinance can not be revised to require clustering and eliminate bonus density in the ag areas i.e. if you are going to build in the NAR and SAR, you have to cluster.

Yes, there should be incentives to build in the growth corridor. The TDR ordinance does this. It provides more density in the growth areas if TDRs are used. A study should be done, or at least a survey, to ask developers what type of incentives could be used in the growth areas (other than infrastructure).

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

There are ongoing talks with Perryville to assist with their infrastructure upgrades in return for a water allocation for the RT. 40 corridor, basically from the Perryville line to the North East line. My concern is that the Seneca Point sewage treatment plant may be reaching its capacity. The county has relied on that plant, as a mainstay of its infrastructure plan and water has been the missing component. Is there a concrete plan? I haven't seen one. There are ideas here and there, but a comprehensive plan of action, I don't think so.

I cannot answer the second question because I wrote it. I am still searching for an answer from legal experts and the planning commission, its director and its lawyer. I sincerely believe the Gaster case gives equal weight in deliberations to the comprehensive plan, but I do not see that happening in the day-to-day planning commission actions. It may have something to do with the legal advice they are given.

COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

The developers and realtors have more access. They come in and run their plans by the commissioners before they even go to the planning commission (not all plans, but the big ones). The county does not ask enough of developers. We are too easy, we do not look out for county interests, we don't know how to bargain, we give things away, we do not have a long term vision, we do not value what we have, we are too easily intimidated by

the phrase “they will sue you”. We have a chance to do it right, but do we have the “will” to do it right. As long as we see land as a commodity to be exploited and not a resource to be protected, we will continue to sell the county and its citizens short.

The APFO ordinance has been stalled by a lack of concentrated effort. There are details that need to be worked out and one of them is a dedicated impact fee to support the needs that an APFO will create.

DOWNZONING

Downzoning is one step towards maintaining our quality of life. As long as the majority of the commissioners are influenced by the development industry and the segment of the agricultural industry that believes it will devalue their land, it will not pass. It has been proven over and over again that downzoning **does not** devalue land in the long term. There is still a segment of the farming community that believes they will lose their life savings and they have the ear of the majority of this board of commissioners. Anyone who has questions about the value of downzoning in preserving agricultural land and the rural character of a community needs to talk with Dan Calhoun, the chairman of the State Ag Land Preservation Foundation. Dan is a farmer and has been involved with the downzoning in Baltimore County for many years. His farm has increased in value. He stated in a recent meeting that the farmer has to have the will to preserve their land. There is the key – the farmer needs to be a farmer and have a love and passion for the land, not a speculator that only sees the land as a means to an end.

As a county, we do not have the mindset to preserve our rural heritage. Until that community will is there and it is embodied in the county commissioners, the planning director and staff, the legal staff, and the planning commission, you will continue to see the destruction of our rural heritage with no thought for the future.

FARMERS CONCERNS

There should be provisions for farms that will put their farms in an agricultural district to give them 100% credit for property taxes. If they are willing to not develop their farm, they are saving the county money by not having to provide services for additional houses.

Farmers have many choices as far as development/non development of their farms. Here is where the “will” to maintain this ground as agricultural ground comes in. The basic question is – Are you a farmer or a developer? There are ways to structure the sale of a farm that the farmer gets optimum dollar, in dollars, tax credits, and inheritance taxes, but many farmers are not willing to explore those options because it is “easier” to sell to a developer. In the long run, farmers can realize a greater dollar from their farm through a combination of easement sales and developing a small portion of their acreage with a lot less hassle. However, that is not being promoted as an option.

Residents of the county can support all the land preservation programs, support the local land trusts that work with landowners to preserve property and support farmers by buying locally.

GROWTH CORRIDOR

Yes there should be disincentives to building in the rural areas.

Incentives for developing in the growth corridor needs to be a discussion between the county and the developers. What do you need as a developer to make the growth corridor more desirable? What market can be targeted for the growth corridor – young professionals that don’t want to be owned by their house/condo/townhouse but wants other amenities close by – walking trails, biking trails, shops etc? Are there other markets that we could target for the growth corridor? We need to think of this as, not only a land use decision, but also a marketing decision.

HOUSING

Cecil County needs an ordinance that requires every housing development, regardless of the cost of the houses, to require that a certain percentage of those houses be workforce housing for police, teachers etc.

IMPACT FEES

Cecil County does not have an impact fee because the county legislative delegation will not pass a law in Annapolis to give us (the county commissioners) the ability to enact one. This is something that the county commissioners do not have the right, by law, to enact on their own; they need permission from the state to do this. We need enabling legislation.

While the county has requested this on numerous occasions the delegation refuses to give us the authority to do this.

JOBS/OPPORTUNITY

County regulations and ordinances need to be altered to further encourage “rural industries”. Farmers would continue to create value added businesses but sometimes the regulations prove too difficult to do this. We need to create an atmosphere where this is encouraged and promoted.

Economic progress goes along with an over all vision. I am not sure Cecil County has that over all vision. It will take much more cooperation and coordination and leadership to realize economic progress that includes big business, small businesses and rural industry.

OPEN SPACE

The county government has refused to make park acquisition a priority. Parks and recreation needs to be a separate department with a director whose main focus is the acquisition and maintenance of parks for the citizens of the county. There is a great need and if the property is not acquired now, it will be lost.

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION

Yes, the county ordinances and timetable for submissions to the P&Z department needs to be revised. The whole structure needs to be examined and reworked. The county commissioners need to ask the planning commission to look at the timetables and come up with a new structure that meets the needs of the citizens, as well as the developers. So far this suggestion has met with resistance from the P&Z department. All parties, P&Z department, developers, planning commission and citizens need to discuss this issue and come up with a solution. There seems to be a resistance on the part of P&Z because this would inconvenience the developers, there is no consideration for the citizens who may be inconvenienced by the additional traffic or overcrowded schools.

There is more to the planning commission considerations than the rules. If the rules were the only thing that the planning commission should consider then the planning department staff could do all the reviews and there would

be no need for the planning commission. The planning commission represents the citizens of the county. It is their duty to look at other factors that play into a decision – the effect on the neighborhood, environmental factors etc. They are the voice of the people, not the developers. The rules do not have to be changed; the planning commission needs to embrace their responsibility as a voice of the citizens.

Yes, there needs to be a residency requirement for the planning commission.

It would be easier to elect a county commissioner board that reflects the will of the citizens. The selection of planning commission members should go back to the requirement that each commissioner selects one planning commission member to represent their district. The current board has two members from the southern end of the county, two members from the Elkton area (the county planning commission does not hear developments from the Elkton area, Elkton reviews their own), one member from the Rising Sun area, and one member from the Fair Hill area. Having one member from each commissioner district would spread the representation throughout the county and get a wider view of citizens' concerns.

There is not an emphasis on environmental concerns throughout the whole process. There is too much reliance on “engineering plans” that are designed to work according to the regulations, but in reality do not work on the ground. There needs to be stronger stormwater management controls and more enforcement powers given to inspection staff. The county needs to take a tougher line on requiring developers to be responsible for problems that occur during and after the development process. Too often it falls on the homeowners to correct the problems because the developer has “followed the rules”. Case in point stormwater management issues in Montgomery Friendship and the trail in Rising Sun.

There needs to be a process that is in P&Z regulations that requires a developer to meet with the citizens of a surrounding community to discuss development plans before they enter the process. This would avoid an adversarial relationship during the development process.

RESOURCES

The county relies too much on the Maryland Department of the Environment to certify that the water resources are adequate for developments. As a

county, we need to take a more common sense approach and not rely on MDE as much as we do. I do not feel MDE has a realistic handle on the water resources of our area, so I feel their assessments are sometimes off target. Water is an essential commodity that needs to be protected and used wisely. I don't think we are taking the protection and use of this resource seriously enough.

There are plans in the works for the landfill, that if we have the resources to implement, will prolong the life of the landfill and correct the odor problem.

When proponents of growth say that houses pay for themselves, they do not take into consideration all the incremental additions to services that houses create. The landfill is one of the areas that is not considered in the impact of housing on the costs of government services. Siting a new landfill would be a staggering cost to the county.

SCHOOLS AND TAXES

The schools are not keeping pace now. Consider Rising Sun Elementary School - capacity approximately 600, current enrollment approximately 800. If the population growth continues, we will be in a real crisis.

Yes, development increases traffic, school enrollment, and ultimately taxes.

TRANSIT

If controls are put in place to protect the rural areas from increased development, the extension of the MARC system could be one of those much-needed incentives to develop in the growth corridor.

VISUAL HERITAGE

That would require willingness on the part of the planning commission to hold developers to those standards and to say "no" to plans that did not meet those standards. Ordinances could be written to incorporate those requirements. This has been done in other counties, one is Calvert County.

ZONING

I agree that zoning approvals are too important to reside in one individual, regardless of their qualifications.