

MINUTES

Commission on Environmental Quality (CEQ)

April 23, 2014, 7:00 PM

Planning Conference Room, Jefferson Building, 105 W. Chesapeake, Towson, MD 21204

Attendees: Valerie Androutopoulos, Bill Breakey, Jim Burkman, Linda Davis, Glenn Elseroad, Brian Fath, Eric Hadaway, Steve Morsberger, Nell Strachan, Rex Wright

Absent: Russell Donnelly (notified chair); Mary Gruver-Byers (notified chair), Lois Jacobs (notified chair), Andy Miller (notified chair), Jeff Supik (notified chair)

Baltimore County Staff: Ayla Haig (EPS), Don Outen (EPS)

Guests: Andrea Van Arsdale, Director, Baltimore Co. Dept of Planning, John Alexander (retired, planning dept.)

1.0 Ms. Van Arsdale updated CEQ on the Dept of Planning activities relevant to environmental issues. She gave an overview of the Master Plan 2020, which is one of two major documents focused on Land Use and Development, Housing, and Commercial Revitalization (dealt within the Master Plan). It is assumed that population growth will continue to occur within the URDL according to 4 growth tiers. Bill Breakey commented that we are creating an environment for growth. Andrea emphasized that if we do not accommodate growth, it will go elsewhere. Don mentioned there are legal issues for not allowing growth in the region. Additionally, minor subdivision limit is at 3 lots within the County while the State allows up to 7. This would have allowed the rural capacity to double, but the County stayed with 3 lots. Brian mentioned that in some areas, like Baltimore City, the population growth is really filling in the previous loss people. There is room to increase density in many ways. More importantly, we should be careful to distinguish between growth and development as different outcomes, the former being quantitative (and therefore ultimately bounded) and the latter qualitative (well-being oriented). Regarding growth Management, there are strong environmental policies. The northern rural areas are fairly locked up; not much planned for the future as agricultural preservation programs dominate, and rural areas will remain relatively stable. Within the URDL, we concentrate people within 1/3 of the County, so the focus is to have the proper services in the urban part of the county to reduce pressure outside of the URDL. There is a focus on good urban areas through Re-development, Re-orientation, Revitalize. Enterprise Zones and Commercial Revitalization zones attract employment and retail uses to commercial corridors (tax credits, low interest loan programs to keep commercial businesses in the URDL). Sparrows Point/Port-specialized manufacturing has been discussed as an option (wind turbines). Dense Residential Zones allow clusters, DR-Zones have no lot size restrictions. Looking to limit variances to get a street friendly or compact development, such as in Towson. These are considered "Set Backs." PUD is still being utilized, allow you to change zoning based on the development plan. However, many developers are opting out of the PUD and moving into the 4-year spot zoning process (CZMP).

Don mentioned that redevelopment projects are required to complete stormwater management, less street parking, and in effect you're getting lower impervious surface per capita, a change in the right direction. With increased density, you begin to get supportable densities for transit, and less sprawl.

101 York Rd- student housing planned for Towson University, increasing density to reduce environmental problems. Burke and York Road is a failing intersection, i.e. you wait more than 3 changes of a light to get through the intersection. These older intersections are difficult because it is costly to widen roads, which essentially posts a moratorium on development in the surrounding area. The through traffic along Burke could prevent development in the Towson area. Basic Services legislation will be revamped to focus on more high quality development within the urban areas.

- A resolution was passed at the 4/21/14 council session to reevaluate basic services for all development. Nell mentioned that a walkability report for Towson had been completed a couple years ago. Since then, increasing residential density has been a focus in the area, increasing events and commercial businesses to attract people to walk in the area.

State required the Counties to do a development capacity analysis a couple years back. Planning office completed studies to see the need for shopping centers. Andrea mentioned Development Capacity Analysis is completed on a GIS basis, coverage factors applied to each of the zones, and theoretically we have more than enough land.

Brian asked what are some of the environmental issues CEQ can help with? Andrea's response:

- Diverse group of representatives is needed for the basic services group
- Any involvement in biking and pedestrian plans. With limited resources, we are looking at Bike Plans to get some financing to community areas (i.e., Catonsville). BGE is moving towards more natural settings in right of ways, which has affected bike path developments. Linda asked if there's an effect of EMFs if these bike trails are located under power lines.
- 101 York Rd – community meetings coming up if anyone wants to testify. From a planning point of view, they believe it is a good project to allow additional student housing.
- Urban Farm study: Resolution from Councilman Quirk, which would allow chickens in urban areas. Right now you can only have chickens in one acre or more. However, backyard chicken farming is being requested by a group of people. Disposal of the manure is a problem, as nutrient loading is an issue. Rats are also a concern.
- The next Master Plan will take place after the 2016 CZMP.

2.0 Administrative Items:

- Minutes were approved with minor corrections
- Annual Report was approved and is ready to go online.

3.0 Council lunch – Council are in favor of trees, and focused on their own districts. Linking some of the positive things that trees do to the negative image of the stormwater fee is imperative. CEQ should continue to support EPS efforts toward tree canopy. Sidewalk go-arounds have recently been approved in a community in place of removing many large older oak trees. Our messages need to be clear to the Council members, as the image of the deer eaten forest at Oregon Ridge impacted a Council member's view on the deer removal. Speaking of deer, deer overpopulation still remains an issue in rural areas, as Glenn pointed out the effect on crops. Valerie mentioned we could promote deer as an edible option if we could promote ways to cook deer. A 5-year contract was renewed with USDA, however the contract was approved too late this year to approve hunting into spring. This year, survival counts were lower, although a small hunt would have been recommended had it been earlier in the season.

Future topics may include climate change & plastic bags. May speaker will be Ed Adams from DPW.

Meeting adjourned at 8:44