

Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission Meeting

July 27, 2015 / 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

**Public Safety Education & Training Center
6852 4th Street
Sykesville, Maryland 21784**

Meeting Summary

Members Present:

Jon Laria, David R. Craig, Derick Berlage, Greg Bowen, Lynn Buhl, Boyd Campbell, Daniel Calhoun, Deborah Carpenter, Christine Conn, Howard Freedlander, Carol Gilbert, Alan Girard, Robert Goldman, Frank Hertsch, Leslie (Les) Knapp, Mary Ann Lisanti, James Kruger, Gerrit Knaap, Stephen Lafferty, Charlotte Lawson-Davis, David Lever, Dru Schmidt-Perkins, Bryce Turner, Stan Wall, Bruce Williams and Duane Yoder

Elected Officials:

Mayor Ian Shaw, County Commissioner President J. Douglas Howard, County Commissioner Dennis Frazier, County Commission Richard Rothschild, Maryland Delegate Susan Krebs

Attendees:

Katie Maloney, Candace Donoho, Melissa Archer, Bobbi Moser, Nokomis Ford, Steven Colella, and Linda Eisenberg, Marty Baker, and John Papagni

MDP Staff:

Wendi Peters, Brandon Wright, Chuck Boyd, Arabia Davis, Melissa Appler, Peter Conrad, and Kristen Mitchell

Welcome and Opening Remarks

The Chair, Jon Laria, welcomed members and guests to the meeting. Mr. Laria thanked the representatives from the Town of Sykesville and the Warfield Complex for the walking tour of the Warfield Complex Redevelopment Project. He then introduced the Honorable Ian Shaw, Mayor of the Town of Sykesville and the Honorable County Commissioner President Doug Howard.

Mayor Ian Shaw welcomed the Growth Commission to Sykesville and provided a short overview of the town's efforts to promote smart growth, in particular its focus on revitalizing Main Street.

President of the Board of Carroll County Commissioners J. Douglas Howard then welcomed the Growth Commission to Carroll County. Mr. Howard noted that Carroll County has prided itself in balancing growth with agriculture preservation. He pointed out one of the County's priorities to promote economic development is to work with the State to improve the Rt. 32 corridor.

Reinvest Maryland Strategy

Secretary David R. Craig reported on MDP's current efforts to implement Reinvest Maryland. Mr. Craig informed the Commission that MDP is investigating locally identified impediments to growth and looking into ways to promote greater flexibility at the local level. He noted that MDP is continuing to work with local jurisdictions that are developing plans and strategies for reinvestment.

Carroll County Commissioner Richard Rothschild

Commissioner Richard Rothschild stated that he supported the Commission's advocacy of reinvestment efforts like those taking place along Sykesville's Main Street, but he expressed concern with other aspects of "sustainability." Mr. Rothschild highlighted three specific areas of concern:

- The Septics Law – He did not agree with the limitations placed on local subdivision activity in this law. He stated that Best Available Technology (BAT) septic systems can be as effective, if not better, than Enhanced Nitrogen Removal (ENR) wastewater treatment plants.
- Historic Preservation – He indicated that historic preservation requirements often contribute to blight because the standards are too costly for property owners to comply.
- Sustainable Housing – He stated that down-payment and low-interest housing assistance programs for lower income households do not factor in the cost of property maintenance. New property owners are often not prepared for the additional costs of maintaining a house, which results in neighborhood blight when housing maintenance is not kept up.

Derrick Berlage inquired about the impact minor subdivisions would have on the rural landscape compared to major subdivisions.

Jon Laria noted that ULI Baltimore's Partnership for Building Reuse study expressed similar concerns about the historic preservation standards for window rehabilitation.

David Lever indicated that he was intrigued with the concept of incorporating a maintenance escrow into the housing mortgage payments, which receive state housing assistance.

Overview of the Town of Sykesville

Ms. Dawn Ashbacher, Town Manager of Sykesville, provided the Commission an overview of the town's efforts to redevelop the Warfield Complex and revitalize Main Street. (*See handouts for details on the Warfield Development and Cultural Center.*)

Overview of Carroll County

Mr. Phil Hager, Director of Carroll County Department of Land Use, Planning and Development, noted that Carroll County has a mix of urban, suburban and rural areas. Mr. Hager stated that Carroll County prepared its first master plan for Carroll County in 1964, and the County Commission recently adopted the 2014 Carroll County Master Plan. He pointed out that agriculture is the County's most important economic development activity. While most people commute outside the county to work, but the county has a balanced growth strategy for a well-planned and logical development pattern.

Ms. Linda Eisenberg provided an overview of the County's future land use plan, noting that 64,000 acres already have been preserved in the County – with a goal of 100,000 acres preserved. The County adopted its countywide master plan in 2014 and is now working on the Freedom Community Comprehensive Plan and a County Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan. Ms. Eisenberg highlighted several community development projects currently underway and noted that the County has a strong planning partnership with its towns – working jointly on a number of projects.

Dan Calhoun noted that Carroll County has one of the best run agricultural preservation programs in the state. The County's Installment Purchase Agreement program has been very successful in acquiring agricultural conservation easements. The Installment Purchase Agreement (IPA) - pays twice yearly tax-free interest for 20 years (for 2014 the rate is 5.25%) with balloon payment of full purchase price at end of period. The tax benefits of the IPA to the property owner are:

1. Income - The difference between the easement value and actual offer may be deemed a charitable contribution. For the IPA option, the twice-yearly interest payments are exempt from federal and state income taxes; and

2. Capital Gains - Capital Gains Taxes may be deferred until the end of the 20-year term, meaning more interest is earned off of the easement value.

Delegate Stephan Lafferty asked if the County had adopted a Growth Tier map, and the answer was no. It was noted that most (70%) of the County's growth occurs in the designated growth areas and 30 % occurs in the rural areas.

Frank Hertsch inquired whether the County was still experiencing localized economic development downturns. Mr. Hager stated that Carroll County continues to be at a competitive disadvantage when compare to the adjacent states.

Administrative Matters and Updates

Mr. Laria introduced the newest member - **James Kruger**, who was appointed by Governor Larry Hogan on May 4th, 2015. He holds a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Science and also has a Master of Public Policy Degree with a concentration in Urban Policy. Mr. Kruger said that it was an honor to be a member and is very supportive of Commission's mission. He indicated that he is interested in serving on the Education Workgroup.

Briefing from the Neighborhood Stabilization Homeownership Workgroup

Delegate Steve Lafferty reported on the work of the Neighborhood Stabilization Homeownership Workgroup. He referred them to the PowerPoint handout dated June 26 for details on the progress that has occurred since the initial Workgroup report was released. These efforts include:

- Expanding partnerships with stakeholders to grow innovative lending practices;
- Expanding the "toolkit" of neighborhood revitalization programs;
- Creating different tools and building stronger relationships with stakeholders;
- Engaging MML and MACo to assist DHCD in reaching its goals; and
- Advocating for federal and state policies that foster safe and sustainable mortgages.

(See a copy of the PowerPoint handout in the July 27 agenda packet.)

Howard Freedlander inquired whether housing foreclosures were still a problem. Carol Gilbert stated that in certain pockets of the state – yes. Mr. Freedlander followed up by asking if whether they were marketing some of these improved housing assistance programs. Ms. Gilbert mentioned that DHCD has the MD Homefront Program that is geared to providing housing finance assistance to returning veterans.

Robert Goldman noted he has observed recently more problems with condo associations not having sufficient reserves to cover maintenance costs, and this is an issue that should be monitored moving forward.

Briefing on the Rural Economies Smart Growth Effort

Mr. Greg Bowen presented the recommendations from the Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee, which can be found in the July 27 agenda packet. The Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee has identified eight action items and proposed a work plan to address them. The Rural Economies Workgroup endorsed these recommendations at its July 10th meeting.

Dan Rider, a member of the Sustainable Forestry Subcommittee, responded to questions that the Commission members had about the recommendations and the work plan.

Bryce Turner applauded the efforts of the Subcommittee. Boyd Campbell inquired about the end user of wood products. In response, Dan Rider noted that MEA has grants for homeowners to buy new clean burning wood stoves. Dru Schmidt-Perkins said that she liked the concepts presented in the Sustainable

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Forestry work plan, but wanted a bit more time to consider the implications. Gerrit Knaap asked whether DNR's Forestry Services had reviewed the proposed work plan and its implications on carbon sequestration. Dan Rider said that he would ask DNR's Forest Services to provide a response back to the Commission.

Greg Bowen then reviewed with the Commission the recommendations from the Land Preservation and Open Space Subcommittee. A copy of this Subcommittee's report can be found in the July 27th packet.

Frank Hertsch stated that he wanted more information on the fiscal impact of the proposed tax credit changes.

No actions on the Rural Economies Workgroup recommendations were taken at this time.

Sustainable and Equitable Economic Development (SEED): (NEW) Beyond Smart Growth: An Economic Development Strategy for 21st Century Maryland –

Gerrit Knaap stated that he wanted to postpone his presentation until the next meeting.

Communication Strategy for the Sustainable Growth and Conservation Indicators Status Check Effort

Jon Laria reported that he was working with MDP on the communication rollout of the Status Check website.

Workgroup Updates

- Adequate Public Facilities Ordinance Workgroup
A copy of the workgroup's report is included in today's packet.
- Concentrating Growth Workgroup
A copy of the workgroup's report is included in today's packet.
- Education workgroup
A copy of the workgroup's report is included in today's packet. The group is interested in suggestions from members of the Commission on potential sponsors for the Sustainable Student Growth Awards.
- Rural Economics Workgroup
A copy of the workgroup's report is included in today's packet.

Public Comments

None.

Chairman Laria adjourned the meeting at 3:45 p.m.