

Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission
Inaugural Meeting

October 25, 2010/1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Maryland Historical Society
201 W. Monument Street
Baltimore, Maryland

Meeting Summary

Members: Jon Laria, Calvin Ball, Derick Berlage, Greg Bowen, Karl Brendle, Russ Brinsfield, David Carey, Kelly Cartales, Cheryl Cort, Sandy Coyman, John Dillman, Alan Girard, David Goshorn, Richard Hall, Don Halligan, Frank Hertsch, Victoria Jackson-Stanley, Brigid Kenney, Gerrit Knaap, Patricia Langenfelder, David Lever, Thomas Liebel, Mary Ann Lisanti, Robb Merritt, Sam Parker, Dru Schmidt-Perkins, Ray Skinner, Rollin Stanley, rep for Bob Walker (Ursula Powidzki), Duane Yoder

Attendees: Martin Bierbaum, Jamie Bridges, Candace Donoho, Kurt Fuchs, Les Knapp, Jennifer Langfield, Bill Orleans, Tom Osborne, Carol West

MDP Staff: Chuck Boyd, Dan Callahan, John Coleman, Amanda Conn, Peter Conrad, Nicole Diehlmann, Roz Hamlett, Rich Josephson, Jenny King, Shannon Marino, Matt Power, Andy Ratner, Sharon Reichlyn, Pat Russell, Shelley Wasserman

Introductions

The Chair, Jon Laria, began the meeting at 1:10 p.m. and welcomed Commission members and staff to the first meeting of the new Sustainable Growth Commission. Mr. Laria then introduced and welcomed the new Vice-Chair, Mayor Victoria Jackson-Stanley of the City of Cambridge. Mayor Jackson-Stanley urged members to visit Cambridge.

Mr. Laria expressed how wonderful to hold the first meeting in such a nice facility as the Maryland Historical Society. He introduced Burt Kummerow, President of the Society. Mr. Laria said the membership of the Commission is outstanding, with a combination of folks that served on the former Task Force. He then asked members to please introduce themselves. Mr. Laria said the experience and diversity of the group will make for a good Commission.

Mr. Laria noted several points of interest and expectations regarding the Commission. Appointments involve a five-year term. Designees are not acceptable; only exception is in terms of State Department Secretaries. Mr. Laria said he hopes to get consistent attendance from the State Departments. The Commission will meet every other month, and perhaps smaller working groups can be scheduled on an as needed basis. Video-conferencing is another idea for Commission meetings.

The next meeting will be a field trip which is scheduled for November 4th. The next Commission meeting is scheduled for December 13th in Annapolis, Maryland. The 2011 schedule is being worked on and will be sent to Commission members soon. Mr. Laria noted that April and August seem to be bad months for scheduling, but members will be notified when dates are finalized.

Mr. Laria advised anyone interested in the field trip should contact Jenny King.

Chair's Remarks

Mr. Laria said he observed that the word "sustainability" has had at least 14 million hits in Google. He said this can be both maddening and gratifying. Sustainability means many different things to so many different people. Mr. Laria briefed members on how the Task Force began, working through 2008-2009 through various workgroups. The Task Force published a report which culminated in a package of Smart Growth bills during the 2009 Session. Three of the bills were enacted into law, including the 12 Visions. Mr. Laria encouraged everyone to take a look at the Visions. He also encouraged members to take the planning commissioners training course that has been offered online.

Other tasks that the Task Force was involved with included a Stormwater Management Forum held in January 2010. The Taskforce played an important role in this effort and Mr. Laria said he hopes this Commission can play a similar role as it moves forward. Mr. Laria then read over the "charge" for the Commission and once again encouraged members to read the 12 Visions. He said he would like to see this group be action oriented.

Mr. Laria said in response to the survey that was distributed members would like to see the group be action oriented. He encouraged members to communicate with each other. Things of interest that you feel should be shared with one another, please let he or Jenny King know. That includes anything you may have written or your organization has produced. He encouraged members to explore State and local government and express their views. He also felt that while consensus is important, there will be times when members will not be able to achieve consensus on issues.

Mr. Laria said there is a lot of value in the room and challenged each one on how they can make a real contribution to this effort. He felt blessed to have a Planning Department that is focused on this Commission and added that the Smart Growth Center is an asset here in Maryland.

The Chairman thanked members once again for being a part of the Commission and giving him the opportunity for this rather one-time lengthy introduction.

Review of Commission Resources

Andy Ratner and John Coleman presented a powerpoint on the MDP website and discussed what resources are available, including the Maryland Sustainable Growth Commission which gives some background and lists the members. Mr. Ratner asked members to let him know if they any suggestions or additions for the website. Mr. Coleman said soon there will be other resources added that includes PDFs, reports of subgroups, a sustainable community's page and legislation. Members having events that they would like to include, please let either he or Mr. Ratner know. Mr. Coleman noted two other websites of interest: Smart Green and Growing and PlanMaryland.

Mr. Ball inquired about other state growth commission examples on the web and what they do.

Ms. Schmidt-Perkins said she would like to have a full contact list of the members.

Mr. Laria then introduced Jenny King, noting that she is a very experienced planning professional. She is not only responsible for MDP's comprehensive planning reviews, but is a very multi-talented planner and a tremendous resource person. Mr. Laria also introduced Martin Bierbaum, who has had a long career in planning and is a great resource for the Commission.

Mr. Hall then asked the MDP staff in attendance to introduce themselves.

Commission Discussion – Questionnaire

Mr. Laria asked Mayor Jackson-Stanley if she would like to say a few words. Mayor Jackson-Stanley thanked everyone for being a part of the Commission. She felt that the goal is to develop a plan of action that will help everyone and outlive us all. She felt that plans and economic development should be aligned.

Mr. Hall said it is important that Maryland has a forum to discuss these issues, i.e. agriculture, transportation, environment, etc.

Mr. Brinsfield had concerns about loss of agricultural land and at such an alarming rate, particularly on the Eastern Shore where population is projected to increase by 150,000 and acreage losses of about 200,000. He stressed the need to create solutions some ways are through Purchase Development Rights and Transfer of Development Rights.

Mr. Parker felt that public education is an issue. He also said we need to look at the meaning of urbanization and what it means to be urbanized. Also need to talk about public transit and transit-oriented development.

Ms. Powidzki said this is a critical time in terms of real estate and the collapse of the real estate market. The group should also be thinking about the demand on commercial real estate. This is an opportunity for more State and local collaboration and openness. She noted that people want predictability. She also was interested in marrying smart growth with economic development. This is a good opportunity for definition.

Mr. Stanley said we need to use the State to bring change, including economic development to the local level.

Ms. Cartales explained “sustainability” – for what? – human life and quality of that life. We need to sustain a “sustainable” life. She noted that it all comes down to politics and that is the real challenge.

Ms. Kenney felt the solution on challenges is cooperation and coordination between all State agencies. She said communication is a beginning. She noted that pollution is a concern and watershed implementation plans are a major issue today and should be addressed by the Commission.

Mr. Merritt said there is not much of an opportunity to decide on a goal. He said from a commercial real estate perspective smart growth decisions may affect his company and the industry. The Commission discouraging greenfields is good for his company but not for the rest of the industry.

Mr. Bowen noted that first there was HB 1141, now the Bay TMDL. If the TMDL is successful, it could be the strongest smart growth strategy we have today. He noted that smart growth is so much more complicated than single-family homes on open land. We need incentives on where we want to grow.

Ms. Schmidt-Perkins said she is concerned that Maryland did not receive any awards from HUD or Tiger II grants. She said we need to step it up in Maryland regardless of the budget crisis. She said we can't continue to do things like we use to do. We need to get plans in sync because we are running out of time. She said she is excited about this opportunity.

Mr. Hertsch said that smart growth and sustainable growth means something to everyone, but he has his own ideas of what it is. He said it is important that everyone come together and resolve some of the conflicts and focus the effort.

Mr. Liebel said with regards to economic sustainability, we need to look at how we promote good citizens; look at our natural resources such as the buildings in Baltimore City and look at how we focus that growth so we do not destroy our heritage.

Ms. Langenfelder said as a representative of the agricultural community, stated that agriculture is alive and well in Maryland. It is one of the largest industries in the State. She said it is important to keep agriculture here and we have a long road to go to come to a consensus on some of these important issues.

Mr. Lever advised that school construction is a big public investment in this State. Approximately \$2 billion in State investment. Education is affected by growth, and we need to look at how school locations can be helped to prevent sprawl. It is important on how this group does with regard to the planning communities. Good plans are important to the educational community.

Mr. Goshorn said that taking the longer term and bigger picture into account are important. We need to strike a balance between the economy and environment. It is a challenge, and we need to recognize this, do our job and help our group.

Ms. Cort said she appreciated the broadening of the group and being able to address issues such as housing, land use and transportation.

Ms. Lisanti said part of MACo's role will be to point out the perspective of local government. We need to be consistent from the municipal level to the local and state level.

Mr. Carey said local governments are on the front lines and it is good to hear about the State level perspective.

Mr. Girard noted that he heard varied priorities from around the table and that they do in fact compete with one another. He does not want to see another Priority Funding Areas Workgroup outcome of no

consensus. Another big concern is the Bay TMDL. A plan has been in place for 38 years. It has not been done yet because it is hard. TMDL's will begin to drive creative solutions. It will create opportunities for concentrated development. Need to take the vision and implement it.

Mr. Yoder, representing Western Maryland, said he is concerned about the serious economic disparities in Maryland. It is important to create and make sure there is prosperity for all income groups and provide revitalization strategies.

Mr. Brendle said there is a lull before the storm. BRAC has forced both State and local government to talk to one another. It has led to a better understanding of mixed use and increased densities.

Mr. Coyman said with respect to local governments, there are problems with smart growth – political will. There is little understanding of what smart growth is and what it means. The public needs to be educated.

Mr. Knaap said he liked the website and felt it was a valuable resource. He also felt that Mr. Laria has done a good job as Chair for the Commission. He said he would like members to commit themselves to doing something every six months.

Mr. Ball said we need to look at how we view this Commission moving forward. He said as an educator, he is fascinated about conversation with regards to growth and development. Active in his work in Howard County, he looks forward to issues concerning transportation, APFO's, and green development. There are many great opportunities to help the public understand and empower them to make our communities the way they should be.

Mr. Dillman noted several things – with the new Legislation (creating this Commission) there is comprehensive representation around the table. Maryland is a very special place and rural areas are one of the main interests. He noted that he is looking forward to working with everyone.

Mr. Halligan felt it is appropriate that the meeting is being held today at the Maryland Historical Society. He noted that “strong deeds and gentle words” is the State motto. He noted it is important that we have a quorum for sustainability and growth. Transportation is one of those disciplines that cross sustainable growth. Transportation is important for the State's economy and local communities.

Mr. Berlage said he has seen a lot of public support for sustainable growth. Need to focus on intergovernmental coordination. Also need public support and engaging the public around these issues is very important. He noted that the public does not necessarily understand the trade-offs to achieve smart growth.

Mr. Skinner stated that in traveling around the State, he is able to get a perspective on varied issues and concerns. Jobs and housing balance is a concern. We need to promote revitalization in older communities. He noted that 60 years ago the Federal government issued a report entitled “A Decent Home.” He said it is still being worked on and is a major goal. He noted that housing choice, transit oriented development, affordability, suitable living, environment, and neighborhoods of choice are still things we strive for.

Mr. Laria said this discussion has been very thoughtful on everyone's part. Each of us has their own perspective, and we need to find a balance for each of us. We need to be mindful of striking that balance.

Mr. Laria then asked if there are any comments.

Mr. Stanley said there is a partnership between state and local government – need to start living smarter.

Mr. Ball said gathering everyone's perspectives is a good start. Everyone wants a better quality of life.

Mr. Liebel stated that everyone wants a better quality of life, whether it is urban or rural.

Ms. Cartales noted that there is an urgency to have needs to be accomplished so actions must be chosen.

Ms. Lisanti said in looking at economic realities, we need a different set of rules. We need to look at how we approach the next six months or five years.

Next Steps

Mr. Laria said at future meetings, it is important that we start on time. Time slot is typically 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Mr. Laria said his expectations today included generally to hear from each of the members and to find out some of everyone's priorities.

Some upcoming events include a bus tour on November 4th. Mr. Laria encouraged members to please come along. It will include lunch and will give everyone an opportunity to get to know one another.

The Commission meeting is scheduled for December 13th in Annapolis, Maryland. Part of this meeting will include a presentation on PlanMaryland; and possibly one on the TMDL process and what this really means.

Mr. Parker suggested that with PlanMaryland, we need to bring in regionalism, i.e. surrounding states.

Mr. Laria said the Work Plan for 2011 is being planned and will include specific items such as PlanMaryland, Resource Development, Infrastructure, and Funding. He said Maryland can be better than what it is. We need to look at how we can make us smarter than smart growth. Leadership needs to come from around the table.

Mr. Laria said the Bay helps us to develop our growth IQ. How do we become smarter about smart growth? We need professional staff and volunteer leadership from this Commission.

Announcements

Mr. Knaap noted there is a TMDL meeting on Wednesday at Morgan State University.

Mr. Halligan said the Blue Ribbon Commission meets on November 15th. More information is located on MDOT's website.

Mr. Laria said if you have not RSVP'd for the Field Trip on November 4th; please get back to Jenny King.

The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m.
