

Board of County Commissioners

Doug Howard, *President*
Haven N. Shoemaker, Jr., *Vice President*
Robin Bartlett Frazier, *Secretary*
David H. Roush
Richard S. Rothschild



Carroll County Government

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Commissioners Make Strong Case for Deferral – Introduce Planning Bill of Rights

Westminster, Maryland, September 1, 2011 – The Carroll County Board of Commissioners' PlanMaryland Forum was held before a packed house Monday night at Carroll Community College. Board President Doug Howard introduced a *Planning Bill of Rights* to emphasize the necessity of maintaining local control over planning decisions.

The extensive list of participants included Maryland Planning Secretary Richard Hall and other state planning officials, Acting County Planning and Zoning Director Tom Devilbiss; Frederick County Commissioners Blaine Young, Paul Smith and Kerby DeLauder; Taneytown Mayor Jim McCarron, and Mayor Neal Roop of New Windsor. Additional state and local officials were among the audience.

The Commissioners again expressed their concern that PlanMaryland poses a threat to local planning authority and presented a compelling case for deferring the Plan for a full year.

Commissioner Howard reiterated his call for a one year delay. Citing our Constitution's Bill of Rights as America's guarantor of freedom, Howard suggested a "Planning Bill of Rights" as a means of explicitly assuring the authority of local planning jurisdictions.

Commissioner Shoemaker questioned the "rush." He reflected that much has changed since 1974, when the enabling legislation for PlanMaryland was enacted, and many counties were no longer making, to quote Governor O'Malley, "stupid" land use decisions. He observed that Carroll County has been following "Smart Growth" development patterns since the 1960s. "Carroll County was doing Smart Growth when Smart Growth wasn't cool," he said. He expressed concern that PlanMaryland would usurp local authority and asked that "Planning and land use be left to the government closest to the people."

Commissioner Roush observed that while professional planners had three years to hash out the ideas embedded in PlanMaryland, elected officials have only had a few months. The Commissioner stressed the need for serious, open debate on the fundamental premises and philosophies driving PlanMaryland.

(more)

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“During the development of this Plan, I am sure your staff had much opportunity for discussion and debate amongst themselves... Why not amongst those of us who will be most directly impacted by the Plan?” he asked.

Commissioner Rothschild said that much of PlanMaryland is based on socio-political ideology, not science, and as such has no place in a planning document. He added that the Plan’s premises are flawed, and therefore cannot legitimately be used to claim it promotes the “general welfare.” This is a pointed reference to PlanMaryland’s enabling legislation, the 1974 Land Use Act, which directs state plans to “promote the general welfare and prosperity...” Finally, he expressed concern that “PlanMaryland will take authority away from local elected officials, who are accountable to voters, and place it in the hands of unelected state bureaucrats.

Commissioner Frazier expressed concern that while objectionable aspects of PlanMaryland itself may not be enforceable on the counties, the Plan provides the rationale for future legislation that is likely to take away local autonomy. She also quoted a frequently heard slogan pushed by the Maryland Planning at the MACo meeting, “Less Sprawl, Y’all!” and asked Secretary Hall for his definition of “sprawl.”

To the stunned audience, he casually answered “two acres.”

The Commissioners voted Tuesday to submit comments on PlanMaryland to be included in the current draft. A revised PlanMaryland draft with all comments to date will begin circulating September 7th. The Commissioners have proposed including the Planning Bill of Rights as an explicit element of PlanMaryland and will be urging other counties to do the same.

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