



NEWSLETTER

WWW.HARWOODCIVIC.ORG

OCTOBER 2011

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Since our last Newsletter, the Harwood Civic Association (HCA) has been active in the Comprehensive Zoning the County has conducted. The following article details that process and our involvement. Comprehensive Zoning is a decennial process, which will impact us all, and the very character of South County. Our aim has been to protect the rural nature of South County, which has been a principle, supported by South County residents over the years. It is work like this that makes HCA a valuable organization to area residents.

HCA thanks the County Executive for his principled stand in vetoing sixteen misguided and egregious amendments added to the District 6 and 7 comprehensive zoning bill by Councilman Jerry Walker. The County Executive has repeatedly stated that he supports keeping South County Rural and that keeping South County rural is more than a slogan but an important policy that should be respected. Mr. Leopold criticized the ill advised zoning changes passed by the County Council as sending a bad message to state officials already contemplating seizing planning control from counties. Kudos to our County Executive for standing up and being counted on this important issue.

No kudos are due to our Councilman Jerry Walker who ignored the General Development Plan and the wishes of his constituents in submitting many amendments that will negatively impact District 7 and several that will adversely impact the rural character of South County. He arrogantly ignored legal requirements and put the landowners, lobbyists

for developers and other special interests ahead of the wishes of his constituents.

In another important step to protect South County, HCA has joined several other Associations and individuals in a law suit challenging the legality of the many of County Council's amendments to the comprehensive zoning bill for Districts 6 and 7, Bill 44-11. More detail on this litigation is contained in a following article.

COMPREHENSIVE ZONING RECAP

Update: Since our last Newsletter, Spring 2011, the County Council has enacted Comprehensive Zoning in Bill 44-11. During its engagement in this long process the Harwood Civic Association (HCA) worked to "Keep South County Rural." We met with our Councilman and testified before the County Council advocating compliance with the General Development Plan and the applicable small area plans which called for preserving South County as rural. We objected to several amendments introduced by our Councilman, Jerry Walker, which would threaten the rural nature of our area. We supported County Executive Leopold's vetoes of these amendments and have joined in a lawsuit filed October 6, 2011, challenging the legality of the County Council's regarding these amendments.

The Process: Anne Arundel County began the process of comprehensive rezoning in late 2009. In order to facilitate the process, the Council and the Office of Planning and Zoning (P&Z) determined to divide the rezoning proposals by Councilmanic District and consider them in three batches. The second batch consisted of zoning changes in Districts 6 and 7.

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Property owners were invited to submit applications for rezoning. During the application process, P&Z received over 90 rezoning applications. The Office of Planning and Zoning (P&Z) published the applications online and invited public comment. P&Z then evaluated the applications. Thereafter, P&Z made recommendations on each rezoning application and incorporated its recommendations in a proposed bill, which was introduced in the County Council, which in the case of Districts 6 and 7 was Bill 44-11.

The second step of the process was a review by the Planning Advisory Board (PAB) which is an organization established by the County's Charter and consisting of seven citizens appointed by the County Executive. The PAB held public hearings on P&Z recommendations and made its recommendations to the County Executive.

The County Council in turn held a series of public hearings on the rezoning proposals at which members of the public were afforded an opportunity to testify and submit written comments on the proposals included in the bill as well as those that were not included. Members of the County Council for Districts 6 and 7 introduced some 46 amendments, all of which made zoning changes not originally proposed by P&Z. Mr. Walker submitted the most amendments. The County Council over several meetings considered and voted on the amendments and finally adopted Bill 44-11 as amended, on August 15, 2011. The adopted bill contained 40 of the amendments introduced by Councilmen.

On August 23, 2011, the County Executive vetoed sixteen of the 40 amendments that had been adopted by the Council. On September 6, 2011, the County Council considered the County Executive's veto message and voted to override his veto of ten of the sixteen amendments.

Amendments Harmful to the Rural Nature of South County.

While we were supportive of other organizations objections to the many amendments, we focused on those that were particularly deleterious to South County' rural character. In our view the most egregious amendments were Amendments 25 (RA to R1 below 214 at the SW corner of Rtes 2/214); Amendment 26 (Boone's Trailer Park - RA to R5);

Amendment 30 (RLD to W2 - Industrial zoning on Crandell Rd south of Galesville in a rural area); Amendment 44 (RA to C2 - commercial encroachment below MD 214 at the Rte 2/214 intersection); Amendment 45 (RA to C1 at Lothian Circle). These amendments were totally inconsistent with the GDP and applicable Small Area Plan in that they would introduce high density residential commercial and industrial uses in rural areas and would lead to ripple effects that will further erode the rural nature of South County. The Lothian Circle and the MD Rte 2/214 intersection rezoning would also have a severe traffic impact on an already overloaded traffic situation.

HCA's Involvement. HCA participated in much of the process. First we met several times with Councilman Walker and expressed our position that South County must be kept rural and against all zoning changes that would be harmful to that end. We testified and submitted written comments to the PAB. We next sent comments to the County Council and testified before that body. We then wrote the County Executive urging his veto of several amendments. We then met with the County Executive to strategize a way ahead to sustain his vetoes. Lastly we have joined the suit against the County regarding the County Council's action on Bill 44-11.

Outcome. There were approximately 24 amendments, which P&Z objected to as inconsistent with the General Development Plan and the Small Area Plans or as constituting spot zoning. Of these, the County Executive vetoed 16 and the County Council sustained six of these vetoes. With regard to the five amendments to which HCA objected, fortunately, Mr. Leopold's vetoes of Amendments 44 and 45 were sustained. However, the County Council overrode his vetoes of Amendments 25, 26 and 30. These amendments continue to be prejudicial to the rural character of South County.

LITIGATION

Of the five amendments negatively impacting South County that HCA objected to, three made it into law. Two amendments set a terrible precedent and could have a negative ripple effect on the zoning of adjacent land parcels. The Boones trailer park was up zoned from RA to R5 (5 dwelling units per acre).

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This change would allow townhouses in an otherwise rural area and is inconsistent with the applicable Small Area Plan. A property at 733 Crandell Road was up zoned from RLD (Residential Low Density – 1 dwelling unit per 5 acres) to W2 Light Industrial District). Placing a light industrial district in an otherwise rural area sets another terrible precedent and constitutes spot zoning.

In view of the seriousness of the threat to the rural nature of South County posed by these amendments, the failure of the County Council to comply with the legal requirement for consistency with the General Development Plan, and the total disregard of the desires of his constituents by Councilman Jerry Walker supported by the rest of the County Council, the Board of Directors of HCA agreed to support and join other Civic Associations as a party to litigation challenging the actions of the County Council.

The press release, reproduced below, of the Growth Area Network, provides additional detail on the litigation and the Complaint will be posted on the HCA website.

Citizens Sue Anne Arundel County over Rezoning

Annapolis, MD. October 5, 2011. The Growth Action Network announced today that several of its member associations had joined with a number of residents of Anne Arundel County to file a lawsuit challenging the way Anne Arundel County is going about comprehensive rezoning. The suit focuses on controversial zoning changes recently made by the County Council in Council Districts 6 and 7.

Describing the background of the suit, Ann Fligsten, Executive Director of the Growth Action Network said, “During the rezoning process, the County’s Office of Planning and Zoning received over ninety applications for rezoning in Districts 6 and 7. After reviewing those applications, the County’s Office of Planning and Zoning drafted a bill for the Council’s approval that included fifty zoning changes. That bill was supported by the County’s Planning Advisory Board, which commended Planning and Zoning for the approach it took. It came as a surprise to many, therefore, when the Council approved amendments to that bill to make an additional forty zoning changes to those that had been recommended. The County Executive vetoed sixteen of those amendments on the grounds

that they were inconsistent with the County’s General Development Plan, but the Council overrode ten of those vetoes.”

According to Mike Lofton of the Harwood Civic Association, “The County’s General Development Plan, which was adopted by the County Council at the end of 2009, was the product of extensive work by the County’s planning staff and thousands of hours of citizen involvement. Maryland law requires that comprehensive rezoning be done in a manner that implements and is consistent with the General Development Plan. It is clear from what happened here that this Council chose largely to disregard the GDP and the advice of the County’s excellent professional planning staff. We believe that not only did the actions of the Council demonstrate an arrogant disrespect for the wishes of the citizens of the County, but they were in clear violation of Maryland law, and we expect the courts to reverse them.”

The suit was filed in the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County. The plaintiffs are represented by a team of volunteer lawyers recruited by the Chesapeake Legal Alliance and headed by Russell Stevenson.

Fifth Decennial Charter Review Commission

Section 1203 of the Anne Arundel County Charter required the County to appoint a Charter Review Commission (CRC) following the Decennial Census for purposes of making a comprehensive study of County government recommending changes to the Charter, including revision of the County Council Districts. The County Council is empowered to change County Council Districts by an affirmative vote of five members. A change in the number of Councilmantic Districts must be approved by voters as a Charter Amendment. Countywide population is averaged to achieve an ideal District population number for each district. This population should reflect a deviation of no more than plus or minus 5% among the districts. This differs from the state and Federally mandated deviation of plus or minus 10%. As part of Resolution 41-00, the County Council has also asked the CRC to look at expanding to 9 Councilmantic Districts. The CRC has completed its report on redistricting and their final report is available on the county website.

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The size of an ideal district is based on data from the decennial Census. Currently, the 'ideal' population number per Council District is 76,335. Population in District 1 decreased significantly using this standard while it increased significantly in District 4. The CRC is providing two recommendations to the Council without comment on their relative desirability. The first, Simple Adjustment Plan, simply moves the line between Districts 1 and 4, which are adjacent, only enough to bring these two districts in compliance with the 5% rule. The second, Proposed Alternative 5, was drawn to balance population and create a more rural District 7, which includes South County. The CRS has not addressed expansion to 9 Councilmatic Districts yet. The second option was presented based on testimony from South County residents who argued that South County is disenfranchised by being combined with Crofton, a large, urban area with differing issues. No councilperson has been elected from South County since Virginia Clagett held the office several decades ago. The ability of a Councilperson from the Crofton area to represent South County was questioned. Jerry Walker's actions during Comprehensive Rezoning were highlighted as in direct opposition to the desire to Keep South County Rural. According to old timers, Crofton was gerrymandered into district 7 to prevent a then sitting councilperson from having to run against a very popular opponent. The County Council tends to protect the interests of sitting councilpersons. If you support Proposed Alternative 5, you should let the entire council know of your position on the issue.

Harwood Real Estate Market

The real estate market in Harwood was sluggish during the summer months from mid-May to mid-September. Only five homes went to settlement, two of which were mobile homes, which sold for \$21,000 and \$25,000. The average selling price of the remaining three was \$458,000. Two of the sales involved seller assistance of \$10,000. One of the homes was part of a bankruptcy and was in need of cosmetic upgrading. One additional unfinished home went under contract with a scheduled settlement at the end of September.

As of mid-September there are twenty homes

actively listed for sale. Five of these are mobile homes with asking prices ranging from \$8,500 to \$75,000. The remaining fifteen homes exhibit a wide range of features and sizes. The most expensive is a new waterfront on two acres with an asking price of \$1,395,000. The least expensive is a small older home in need of repair on an eight-acre parcel. It is listed for \$350,000. Fourteen of the twenty homes have been on the market for one hundred or more days.

The Harwood market encompasses a variety of home styles ranging from mobiles to traditional to contemporary. The oldest home listed was built in 1930, and two of the homes date from 2010. Two of the properties are farms with acreage of twenty-one to twenty-three acres. The overall housing market seems to be reflective of the cautious approach of buyers in this economy. With the holiday season approaching, it may be early spring before improvement is evident.

Meet Laura Groo

Anne Arundel County Teacher of the Year 2010-2011

What does it take to be named "Teacher of the Year"? If it takes enthusiasm, creativity, genuine affection for young people, and appreciation of the art form known as teaching, then Laura Groo deserves the title. Her bright and cheerful classroom is filled with the work of students who love spending time there.

Raised and educated in Arizona, Ms Groo began her career in Prince George's County, but the inspiration to become a teacher began years earlier when she helped younger children at her school with their reading assignments. After a break from teaching to raise her own children, she came to Southern Middle School as a substitute teacher. She knew then that she had found her place and has been there ever since.

Her special gift and passion is the integration of fine arts with the language arts curriculum. Through role-playing and artistic projects, both individual and group, the students bring to life the characters and ideas found in their reading assignments. The emphasis in the classroom is on positive reinforcement as students vie for special privileges

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they have earned during the weekly classroom sessions.

Workshops and continued learning of the fine arts infusion concept led her to a meeting with Tim Gregory, the director of Kenya Connect, a program that links schools in Kenya with partner schools in Maryland. Ms Groo's students began a pen pal experience, which eventually led to a school-wide read-a-thon to raise money to purchase a rainwater containment tank that provides fresh water to the students at Kyamatula Primary School. Seeing the disparity that existed between their lives and the lives of their new friends, the students at Southern Middle in all three grade levels raised over three thousand dollars that purchased not only the water tank but also sporting goods equipment for the students at the school. When asked how long the project would continue, Ms Groo responded that it is an ongoing permanent partnership that helps the students to think globally and appreciate other cultures.



Ms Groo's overall teaching philosophy can be summed in these words: "Learning is lifelong. A person can always learn more." When asked what she would be doing if she wasn't a classroom teacher, she replied that she would be traveling the world as an itinerant instructor promoting the integration of fine art into the curriculum. Her favorite "teacher movie" is The Miracle Worker, in which Anne Sullivan struggled to find a way to reach her "unreachably handicapped" student, Helen Keller. She had to invent the way to reach the child she was teaching. If good teaching is about a series of small miracles, then look no further than Ms Groo's class

Calendar of Events

October 15 - **SERC CANOE EXCURSION**

All Ages

Location: SERC Reed Education Center

Start: 9:00AM

End: 11:30AM

Paddle along the shores of Muddy Creek and the Rhode River to learn about one of the many tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay. We'll look for wildlife, eagles, shorebirds, reptiles, and more. This trip is designed for beginning and intermediate paddlers. Basic instruction will be given at the start of the program.

Contact Info: Registration is on-line only: Cut and paste the following link into a separate window to register:

[http://www.doubleknot.com/openrosters/ViewActivitySpaceAvailable.asp?](http://www.doubleknot.com/openrosters/ViewActivitySpaceAvailable.asp?classificationID=16398&orgkey=2569)

[classificationID=16398&orgkey=2569](http://www.doubleknot.com/openrosters/ViewActivitySpaceAvailable.asp?classificationID=16398&orgkey=2569)

Age: 6+

Cost: \$14 adults, \$7 children (6-12 yrs)

Pre-Registration: Yes

October 16 - **SHADEY SIDE RURAL HERITAGE SOCIETY WEST RIVER**

HERITAGEDAY OYSTER FESTIVAL, 12:30 – 5:00 PM. Admission \$6.00/person, free for children under 12. Captain Salem Avery Museum.

Traditional food from the Bay: fried oysters, grilled oysters, oysters on the half shell, hot dogs funnel cakes, beer, wine and sodas. Musical groups will provide entertainment. Park at Shady Side ball fields and catch free shuttle.

October 18 - **JUG BAY WETLANDS SANCTUARY (JBWS) BUTTERFLY WALK**

When

Tue, October 18, 10:30am – 11:30am

Where

5702 Plummer Lane, 20711

Join us after our Garden Club work for a leisurely stroll of the Butterfly Garden and BayScape habitats to identify the butterflies and other important pollinators hard at work in our gardens. All ages welcome. Bring binoculars and a field guide if you have them. FREE!

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October 22 - JBWS AUTUMN HIKE

1:00 – 3:00 PM. See JBWS website closer to the date for details.

October 29 - SERC INTRODUCTION TO SPIDERS

All Ages

Location: Reed Education Center

Start: 1:30 PM

End: 2:30 PM

Do you know the difference between hunting and weaving spiders? In this program we will explore some of the unique features of spiders from their hydrostatic skeleton to their multiple eyes and hooked legs. Great for all ages.

Contact Info: Registration is on-line only: Cut and paste the following link into a separate window to register:

<http://www.doubleknot.com/Registration/CalendarDetail.asp?ActivityKey=1023319&OrgKey=2569>

Age: All Ages

Cost: \$4/person

Pre-Registration: Preferred but walk-ins accepted if space is available

October 30 - GALESVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY OKTOBERFEST AND ANTIQUE TRACTOR SHOW. 12:00 to 4:00 PM.

Oktoberfest at the Galesville Heritage Museum on Main Street and the Antique Tractor Show on the Montell Farm Field also on Main Street, Galesville.

November 11 - GALESVILLE HERITAGE SOCIETY VETERANS DAY OBSERVANCE.

11:00 AM, Galesville Memorial Hall

November 5 - SERC CONTEE WATERSHED TRAIL HIKE

All Ages

Location: Reed Education Center

Start: 11:00 AM

End: 12:30 PM

The Contee Farm is SERC's newest property and is a pristine forest. Come join us for a hike through the new watershed trail and to the new overlook. Hike is approx. 1 mile over moderate hills and inclines.

Suggested for ages 8+.

Contact Info: Registration is on-line only: Cut and paste the following link into a separate window to register:

<http://www.doubleknot.com/Registration/CalendarDetail.asp?ActivityKey=1023320&OrgKey=2569>

Age: Suggested for 8+

November 5, December 3, January 7 - JBWS BIRD WALK When?

Sat, November 5, December 3, January 7, 8 – 11am

Description

Learn the skills of identifying birds by sight and sound. Binoculars and field guides are available to borrow. Wear comfortable walking shoes and dress for the weather. Not appropriate for children younger than 12.

Jug Bay Wetlands Sanctuary, Lothian, MD. 410 741-9330

www.jugbay.org

November 12 - JBWS BALD EAGLE FIELD TRIP

When?-Sat, November 12, 7am – 4pm

Where

Meet at Davidsonville Park & Ride at Rt. 424 and 50

Description

Join Sanctuary naturalists for a day of eagle ecology. We'll travel to north central Maryland along the Susquehanna River to observe the bald eagles that concentrate there. We'll discuss bald eagle natural history, their amazing recovery from the endangered species list, and what the future holds for our national bird. We'll carpool in a DNR passenger van from the Davidsonville Park & Ride at Routes 424 and 50. Pack a bagged lunch, wear comfortable walking shoes, and dress for the weather. Bring a camera to capture these remarkable raptors in action! Fee: \$10/person. Download a Program Registration form here: <http://www.jugbay.org/education>

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