



MARYLAND ORNITHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Howard County Bird Club A Chapter of the Maryland Ornithological Society



March 20, 2017

Howard County Council
3400 Courthouse Dr.
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Dear Council Members Weinstein, Ball, Terrasa, Sigaty, and Fox:

The Maryland Ornithological Society and its Howard County chapter, the Howard County Bird Club, support CB-23-2017. This bill will restore equity to property devalued under the current County Tier Map. This is just the creative solution we called for when opposing CB-18. The argument at the time for opening 1615 acres to development was that Tier IV designation disqualified farms from preservation programs because Tier IV eliminated the possibility of subdivision. CB-23 takes into account the subdivision potential of a farm based on its underlying zoning, not its tier classification, solely for the purpose of eligibility for agricultural preservation. We might also suggest that the bill be expanded to allow the underlying zoning to determine the landowner's Density Exchange Option as well.

The Maryland Ornithological Society (MOS) is a statewide nonprofit organization established in 1945 and devoted to the study and conservation of birds. Currently we have 15 county-based chapters and 1,600 members. The Howard County Bird Club (HCBC) was established in 1975, and has over 200 members. We will detail other concerns with the Amendment below.

We believe that CB-23 will keep farmland as farmland, rather than housing developments. We encourage the preservation of farmland, which in turn preserves irreplaceable wildlife habitat, green open space, and water quality, not to mention the iconic rural landscape as depicted on our County Seal. Please support and pass CB.23.

Sincerely,

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**Howard County Council
Testimony on CB24-2017 On-site sewage disposal system
Position: Support with Amendments**

The Sierra Club supports CB24-2017 with amendments. Protecting our drinking water and Chesapeake Bay is easily achieved with new technology. Amendments requiring the new technology in all new septic systems will benefit small businesses, and county taxpayers.

A leading indicator of damage to Chesapeake Bay is the nitrogen released from septic systems. Best Available Technology substantially reduces the nitrogen levels released from septic systems. Many systems are available to reduce the nitrogen levels which are harmful to our oysters, crab and fish in Chesapeake Bay.

http://www.chesapeake.org/stac/presentations/224_3BRubin_Overview%20of%20Best%20Available%20Technologies%20for%20Onsite%20Septic.pdf.

Protection of our underground drinking water is also critical. Water from septic systems becomes part of our underground water supply. Those in areas using septic systems also use well water for drinking. New technology will protect the drinking water of existing residents when there is any new house. Alternative septic technologies are used in other states. States using Alternative Septic Technologies for drinking water protection include New Hampshire and Oregon.

Public water and sewer are alternatives to adopting new technologies; however Howard County's budget and bond funding limitations are insufficient to extend water and sewer to Western Howard County. The cost of the new technology is better incorporated into new home prices rather than by increasing taxes for all residents to pay for costs from new development.

The cost of new technology is not excessive for new home buyers. Financing is spread over many years. My septic tank upgrade cost only \$800.

Recommended Amendments:

1. Delete "installed within a major subdivision in the rural conservation (RC) zoning district". Deletion means that any new septic system would must use new technology.
2. Add to the definition of Best Available Technology: "or any Alternative Septic Technology approved by the Chesapeake Bay Foundation which achieves the best sewage treatment considering future development in the affected area".

Sierra Club supports this bill provided that certain amendments are adopted.

Alan Schneider
Vice Chair
Sierra Club Howard County Group

Founded in 1892, the Sierra Club is America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization. We have more than 14,000 members in the Maryland Chapter along with an additional 30,000 supporters, and there are over 650,000 Sierra Club members nationwide.