

Sayers, Margery

From: Steven Hunt <stevenhunt65@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 20, 2017 10:54 AM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: Testimony Regarding Council Resolution 111-2017
Attachments: CR111-2017 Testimony_Written.docx

Members of the Howard County Council,

As a follow-up to my verbal testimony provided at the Legislative Public Hearing of Monday, July 17th, please find attached my written inputs regarding the subject legislation. As I noted on Monday, I have a number of concerns regarding the establishment of the Laurel Park Station project as a "special taxing district," and the Tax Increment Financing (or TIF) that would follow. These concerns are both with the fiscal impact to the County, as well as the impact of the project on the surrounding communities along the Route 1 corridor. I'm a resident of that community, and in speaking with my neighbors, there are real concerns regarding this project, to the point where I would respectfully submit that tabling the legislation until after the Council's August recess may be in order.

Please contact me with any questions. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Steve Hunt

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Steve Hunt
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**MY TESTIMONY, RE: CR111-2017
CONCERNS WITH TIF FOR LAUREL PARK STATION PROJECT**

Members of the County Council,

My name is Steve Hunt, and I live at 9630 Park Avenue, Laurel, Maryland. I'm writing to provide comments pertaining to Council Resolution 111-2017 (CR111), and while I serve as Chair of the Howard County Board of Appeals, I'm writing to you as an individual.

I use the words "pertaining to", rather than "support of" or "opposition to", because I don't feel that there is sufficient information to make such a final determination regarding the establishment of a "Special Taxing District" for the Laurel Park Station project. There are a number of issues that need to be addressed, and I'm hopeful that there will be a rigorous, much needed dialog between the County, the developer and the affected communities in North Laurel, along with those along the Route 1 corridor. While I understand that this designation in no way affects the project itself, the fact that upwards of \$60 million of bond authorization is being requested gives the County Council – as well as the citizens it represents – the right to ask questions regarding not only the designation, but the project included in the special taxing district.

My first – and greatest – concern is regarding the affect this project will have on traffic. Anybody that's travelled Route 1, especially the stretch between the Howard/Prince George's county line and Guilford Road, knows that it can get quite congested. This is especially true during the morning and evening commutes, as well as the weekends. I can only imagine the impact of upwards of an additional 1000 residential units, plus retail and office space, on Route 1. This could be especially problematic for commuters trying to enter the project from Route 1 southbound, or entering Route 1 southbound from the project, both of which will necessitate crossing Route 1 northbound. I would think that a comprehensive traffic study – including some form of a mitigation plan – would be in order before a decision of this financial magnitude would be made.

There's also the issue of sidewalk improvements. A minor issue to some, yes, but many of us in the Southeast part of the County has long been frustrated with the fact that, once you cross the Prince George's/Howard county line, sidewalks are either inconsistent or non-existent. Will some of the funds generated by the issuance of bonds be allocated to improve this situation, or will they only be used within boundaries of the site plan? This is yet another question that deserves an answer from the developer and/or the County.

There's also the question on how this project will affect our schools, especially in light of the redistricting efforts under way. There are also other critical services such as police, fire and rescue, hospitals – with Howard County General already under increased pressure with the downsizing of Laurel Regional – and so forth.

I'll close by saying this: I am not, in principle, opposed to TIF's. I believe this mechanism is a useful tool to spur development in those areas where additional incentives are needed. Certainly, the Route 1 corridor – especially the Southeast section – would meet that standard. However, use of a TIF should serve the interests of government, developer and community – what some would call the “common good”. If CB-111 will achieve this goal, I can support this measure. If, however, this is nothing more than a giveaway to a developer, not benefitting the common good, I would stand in opposition. I look forward to a continuation of this conversation, and will make myself as needed to be a part of these discussions. Thank you for your time.

Steve Hunt
Laurel, Maryland

Lisa Markovitz

President, The People's Voice

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CR111 TIF – Oppose

I don't envy the Council their work this month for sure. I have a Masters in Finance and reading this Resolution made my eyes cross. I understand that TIFs can be helpful when there is a blighted area much in need of development, with none planned, and incentives need to be found to get it done. I understand that even in a non-blighted area, if development is going to be done where large infrastructure improvements are needed, even without the added density needing to be accommodated, that a TIF can help get that infrastructure much faster.

What I do not understand is the degree to which we seem to go to aid projects, first of all, that are going to be profitable and done regardless. As for CR111, we don't see a problem with the County assisting with public amenity upgrades, but as is stated "financing, reimbursing, or refinancing" parking that is needed, storm water improvements, utility needs, engineering and design, road access, landscaping and permits are all areas for which developers should be just footing their own bill for their project.

This project has very high density. I am not sure if they had to wait a while for allocations from the ability to roll over, which the APFO task force, and DPZ recommended to end, or not, but that is a very big benefit to be able to produce. We understand property rights and following the law, but that's not the case here. Extra financial benefits are being sought. So, please consider some limitations on what the County is to pay, and add some school money to the TIF, after all 1000 units is going to produce a whole school's worth of students.

Thank you and good luck.