



Peter L. Beilenson, M.D., M.P.H., Health Officer

August 15, 2012

To: Lonnie Robbins
Chief Administrative Officer

From: Peter L. Beilenson, MD, MPH
Health Officer

Subject: Testimony – Amendments to County Code Sections 3.8, 12.106 &
New Fees

The purpose of this legislation is to amend portions of Sections 3.8 (specifically 3.801 & 3.806) along with Section 12.106 of the Howard County Code by redefining and replacing “on-site sewage disposal permit” with “sewage disposal permit.” Additionally, the Health Department is proposing fee changes to our septic system installation permits by creating and clarifying fees for “centralized treatment and drainfield installation,” an individual “house connection,” plus imposing an overall “fee cap per system” under the general heading of “Shared System Installation Permits.”

The code changes are intended to update and incorporate all aspects currently contained within the sewage disposal permit process. The drainfield and house connection fees are a new breakout of our current “Residential Septic System Installation Permit” fee, designed to more accurately reflect inspection efforts associated with each aspect of the system installation, as well as to tie payment more appropriately to the time of service. Though potentially shifting some of the cost burdens between developer and builder, this per lot fee is net-neutral in terms of overall per lot cost when compared with the current per lot residential installation permit fee.

Back in January 2012 (with further amendments in June 2012), the Board of Health approved the proposed code changes regarding the on-site sewage disposal permit, along with the final amended fee proposals. The final amended fee structure was the culmination of several meetings, presentations and discussions with members of the Department of Planning and Zoning Home Builders Group and the Howard County Chapter of the Homebuilders Association of Maryland. Key points in these discussions (and ultimate agreement) were the confirmation that the “House Connection” inspection was solely the responsibility of the Health Department and the agreement to placing an overall cap of \$10,000 for the portion of the permit related to the centralized treatment drainfield installation. The proposed cap would equate to inspection activities associated with the installation of a 43 lot shared system. An internal review of other shared system installations performed by the Department suggests that relevant costs should be covered for this size system or larger. A written letter from the Howard County Chapter of the Home Builders Association of Maryland in **support** of these proposed regulations and fees is attached.

With the adoption of these proposals, the Health Department does not anticipate any impact to our daily operations and regulatory oversight of these permitted facilities. These changes will essentially update what our current approach to a sewage disposal permit entails, plus importantly, provide clarity to the shared system installation permit fees and a more time-appropriate collection of fees. Payments by developers for work (house connections) not likely to be performed for a few years reduces their upfront and carrying costs, while the overall cap provides relief from potential excessive costs for larger sized shared systems.

Attachment

cc: Ray Wacks

Jennifer Sager



June 14, 2012

Mr. Bert Nixon
Howard County Bureau of Environmental Health
Division of Land Development
7178 Columbia Gateway Drive
Columbia, MD 21046

RE: Proposed Health Department Septic System Inspection Fees

Dear Mr. Nixon:

On June 14, 2012 I met with the Howard County Chapter of the Homebuilders Association of Maryland and discussed the proposed Howard County Health Department Septic System Inspection Fees.

Our group supports leaving the current inspection fee total of \$396/lot in place. We understand that fee will be broken up so that approximately \$165/lot will be charged to the Builder for the inspection of the house connection to the grinder can, with the remaining \$231/lot charged to the Builder/Developer for the inspection of the drain field.

Our support of this fee is predicated on a total drain field inspection cap of \$10,000. We interpret this to mean that total to be charged at \$231/lot, for the inspection of a drain field system cannot exceed \$10,000. The \$10,000 cap should provide ample inspections for a large drain field system should Howard County overturn their current policy and allow large systems to be built again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jeremy Rutter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jeremy Rutter
President – Howard County Chapter of Homebuilders