



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HOWARD COUNTY, INC.
LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HOWARD COUNTY EDUCATION FUND, INC.
5430 Vantage Point Road, Suite C, Columbia, MD 21044
www.lwvhowardmd.org
info@howard.lwvmd.org
410-730-0142

CB 70-2018

At its September 6th meeting, The Board of Directors of the League of Women Voters of Howard County voted to support CB-70. The League has had a long held position supporting a separate legal counsel for the Planning Department and the Planning Board. We believe the need is especially necessary as the Columbia Downtown Plan, a General Plan Amendment, is implemented.

During the course of the last few years, as the principal developer has presented Final Development Plans and Site Development Plans for phases of Downtown Development, there have been many requests for changes to the original plan. Some changes are to be expected, but we believe that since the Planning Board has decision responsibility for the Plan, a zoning counsel should be available to determine which requested changes veer too far from the original plan and should either be turned down, negotiated, or require an amendment to the General Plan Amendment by the County Council.

Thank you for your positive consideration of this legislation.

Linda Wengel

League of Women Voters of Howard County Action Chair

September 16, 2018

TO: Howard County Council

FROM: Joan Lancos
6110 Covington Road
Columbia, MD 21044

RE: Council Bills 71-2018, 70-2018, 69-2018

I am unable to attend the County Council Hearing on September 17, 2018. Below is my testimony on three bills up for your consideration.

Council Bill 71-2018

Council Bill 71 would require that Planning Staff be available for questioning under oath at quasi-judicial Planning Board hearings. I am not sure what this bill is trying to accomplish. As a former Planning Board member, I often questioned Planning staff without fear that their responses were not truthful. Based on recent observations of public hearings, I don't know that allowing questioning of staff under oath by Planning Board members, lawyers representing petitioners or opponents, or the General Public would accomplish anything other than to delay and prolong cases before the Planning Board. In any event, any change of this significance should only be considered as part of the on-going Zoning Regulation Assessment. I request that you vote "NO" on Council Bill 71-2018.

Council Bill 70-2018

Council Bill 70 amends certain posting requirements for proposed community meetings. I attend many pre-submission community meetings. I think the meetings provide valuable insight and opportunity to neighbors regarding proposed development. Providing additional information that makes the sign posting more useful could be helpful. If the pre-submission process will be part of the Zoning Regulation Assessment, it may be beneficial to wait to make changes under that process. However, I am not opposed to Council Bill 70-2018.

Council Bill 69-2018

Council Bill 69 would require the Zoning Counsel appear at Planning Board hearings in support of adherence to the Downtown Columbia Plan. The NT zone was created to allow flexibility in final plans for the development of the planned community. The Planning Board was given the role of determining whether submitted Final Development Plans met the goal of the original design. The Section 125.0.E.4 specifically calls for flexibility in the review of FDPs in the Downtown Plan. I do not understand the need for the Zoning Counsel to appear at Planning Board hearings on development plans to assure adherence to a plan that is supposed to be flexible in its implementation. As a former Planning Board member, I believe this bill usurps the original intent and power given to the Planning Board when the NT zoned was first approved and re-affirmed under the Downtown Columbia Master Plan. I strongly encourage you to vote "NO" on Council Bill 69-2018.