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- I am here to testify about the new proposed East Columbia 50+ Center, project C0335. East Columbia has the largest current and projected Senior population in the county.
- In 2015 a Master Plan was developed to “Create an Age Friendly Community”. That plan called for a 35,000 square foot Regional Senior Center in East Columbia to replace the less than 3000 square feet of space we currently have. Given that document, it should have been built by now.
- The FY16, FY17, and FY18 budgets had funds for design but no design was undertaken. When the FY19 budget had the same language (4 years of no action) the seniors of East Columbia spoke out loudly in testimony at budget meetings of the County executive and the County Council, wrote letters, and a petition was delivered to the County executive asking that full design money be allocated for FY19 with **construction in FY20 and opening in FY21**. Those efforts led to an amendment to the FY19 capital budget which was approved. It had 2 options: if the library site was deemed feasible, we would have the new center ready for use in FY21. Otherwise a year of land acquisition would push the opening to FY22.
- Architects were hired and a parking study was undertaken. The library site was indeed deemed feasible and in fact, desirable. A parking study was also conducted with positive results. Architects have met with the community twice in public meetings and the Seniors are very happy with both the design and location.
- The FY20 proposed capital budget has reneged on this promise. It calls for **design and beginning construction in FY20, construction in FY21 and open in FY22**. The text clearly states that the construction portion of funds for the new 50+ center is in **FY21**. This is unacceptable. The East Columbia seniors feel ignored and rejected once again. I have lived in East Columbia for 39 years, paid taxes, and have voted in every election. Seniors do not use many of the resources in Howard County but we do need 50+ Centers.
- I urge you to support the original schedule as promised in the FY19 budget with full funding for construction in FY20 and an opening in FY21. I am not getting any younger and we have been waiting for 5 years for this project to move forward