

Sayers, Margery

From: Joan Lancos <joanlancos@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, September 10, 2019 4:38 PM
To: CouncilMail
Subject: CB 41-2019
Attachments: CB 41. 2019.docx

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I am unable to attend the hearing on September 16. Attached please find my comments regarding the above referenced bill.

Joan Lancos

TO: Howard County Council

FROM: Joan Lancos

6110 Covington Road
Columbia, MD 21044

SUBJECT: Council Bill 41-2019

I want to express my support for Council Bill 41-2019 which would establish a Community Zoning Case Navigator. As some of you may know, I work for the Village of Hickory Ridge as their Land Use Liaison. My position is very similar to what is defined in the bill. I track, monitor and follow local development and zoning issues that may affect the village. I attend Pre-Submission Community Meetings, Planning Board and Zoning Board meetings and follow land use issues in order to keep the Village Board and the local community informed. The Columbia Association has a similar staff position.

Zoning and Land Use in Howard County is very complicated. There are many opportunities for the community to learn about and provide input to proposed development projects. However, there are so many variations on the method for approval, that it is hard to figure out how to identify and track issues that might be of interest to a resident or a neighborhood. A long-term goal of the County Council should be to simplify and clarify how residents can be part of the process.

The powers and duties listed in the bill are all important pieces of the services that should be available to the general community. If you search long enough on the County website, it is possible to find out about most of the zoning process. There are some excellent how-to checklists and flowcharts on the processes. Plans submitted for review can be viewed electronically. A goal of the Zoning Navigator should be to bring together the already available information into one easy to find and negotiate location. The Zoning Navigator need not be an attorney, but simply someone who can translate development and land use terms into simple language and step-by-step instructions to follow to help residents advocate for themselves or their community.

I am not sure that the position needs to be a merit position or that it needs to be full time. It might make more sense and provide more flexibility if the position was hourly or on-call. I do think it is important to limit outside land use activities of the Zoning Navigator while they are employed by the County Council. In addition, it might be helpful to clearly indicate how this position is different from the Zoning Counsel position.

If I can be of any assistance to you or the future Community Zoning Case Navigator, please feel free to contact me at joanlancos@gmail.com.