



Howard County Citizens Association
Since 1961... The Voice of the People of Howard County

May 24, 2021

County Council – HCCA Positions on Resolutions 72,73,74,86,80 2021

Resolutions 72/73 – These fees have been stagnant for far too long and need to be reviewed for a rational increase. Adding a purely inflationary clause to increase automatically is warranted.

Resolution 74 – the ZRA petitioner fee should be increased to follow the County Code and have the Council set the appropriate cost to the County to be reimbursed by petitioners who stand to profit immensely from these measures. Individuals who petition for these changes also benefit very much, and should have to weigh investing in a change carefully, since the changes affect others.

Resolutions 86/89- The HCCA has argued for a long time to raise or eliminate the fee-in-lieu of providing MIHU's to get them more spread out, and/or get more County funds closer to the cost of the units. These fees are artificially capped by the building industry which is entirely inappropriate and not done by other jurisdictions. The cap has to be removed. While it is in place, the Council should be told the maximum that can be chosen to raise the fee in the legislative financial impact information.

The Howard County Citizens Association (HCCA) agrees with the testimony provided by The People's Voice (TPV) on these resolutions.

Stu Kohn

President

The People's Voice, LLC

Ethics Ballot™

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May 17, 2021

County Council Testimony

CR 74 – ZRA fee increase - Support

The ZRA process is lengthy and costly to the County. It ends up being a balancing act to provide a regulation change due to a request from one petitioner regarding a particular property, yet not be spot zoning. The petitioner decides not to go for a piecemeal process, likely due to that being even longer and more expensive for them; however, the Council has to deal with these and figure out any unintended consequences and not do spot zoning. One of these was even overturned by the Circuit Court on motions as illegal spot zoning in the Glenelg case.

Raising this fee is warranted due to the difficult work they entail and requirement of a lot of County resources. Some may say that individuals are allowed to bring ZRA's and it should not be cost prohibitive for them to do so. Currently, if a ZRA becomes sponsored by a Council Member the fee is waived. The Council could amend legislation to allow for the waiving of the fee in other circumstances as well, such as once passed it is deemed to have been beneficial to the County, without a costly process.

Since our code requires the County to cover costs to provide the ZRA process in setting its fees, this one needs to be updated. Others do as well of course, in that we don't protect the County's costs on all these fees, for decades in our procedures, yet we have allowed maximums dictated from one industry inflation index for MIHU fees-in-lieu and Building Excise taxes.

Lisa Markovitz
President