

2/12/15
Joel Goodman

Good evening and thank you for this opportunity. My name is Dr. Joel Goodman, and I live at 3700 Cattail Greens Court in Glenwood 21738. I'm here to speak in favor of the legislation regarding the proposed Office of Community Sustainability. I speak for myself, but considering transparency, I should note that I am chair of the Howard County Recreation & Parks Advisory Board and, recently, I served on the County Executive's Transition Team for Rec & Parks.

When I first heard of this legislation, I, like many, was concerned that the loss of the word "environmental" from the name of the Office would mean that environmental issues and conservation advocacy would be pushed to the back burner. However, as I read the bill, spoke with folks around the County, and thought on it, I was filled with optimism that the expansion of the scope of the Office's responsibilities will actually strengthen its ability to develop and advocate for environmental programs, policies, and actions. I must note, however, that this optimism is tempered with caution.

This Council has heard me testify about dark skies and smart lighting solutions - issues which have both environmental AND economic implications. The other day, I read in the paper that - as part of proposed budget cuts - funding for a pilot street lighting conversion project may be cut. I'll reserve my detailed comments about that for later outside of this testimony.

However, this is where my cautious optimism comes in. I don't believe that a program like the pilot lighting

conversion project would be cut if the Office of Community Sustainability had input. Such an office will be most effective because it will have ALL of the informed players at the same table. This way, it will have both the resources and interest going forward to identify and assess ALL reasonable methods which may assist the County in the long term to address issues of environmental impact and reduce our collective carbon footprint.

Finally, the portion of the proposed legislation which speaks to the Office working closely with all boards is music to my ears. The proposed periodic meetings of the redefined Office with the chairs of County boards and commissions will be of great benefit for all of us to stay informed firsthand.

Thank you.