

CR69-2015

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To: CouncilMail

October 5, 2015

Dear Council Members,

I am writing to urge you to support passage of CR69-2015 as well as Council Member Terrasa's amendment to it. I am very pleased that the County Executive seeks to sell the Hurst property. Given the County's financial deficit and the need for additional funds to support an additional school site, sale of this property promptly is the most appropriate course of action.

Property from the corner of Route 1 and Whiskey Bottom, north to the Hurst and Beechcrest properties has been a particularly sore subject to residents in North Laurel and Savage for years. Community members have wanted the Department of Planning and Zoning and the Economic Development Authority to include citizen input in the conversations around the revitalization of Route 1 in our area.

Therefore I greatly appreciate Council Member Terrasa's attempt to assure that the property will be developed in a manner regarded as beneficial to the community, by the community. Citizen input on the decision making process is critical to assure that outcome. Recent confirmation that there is NO Southeast Area Plan (despite Ms. McLaughlin's assurances during the transition process that it was "almost complete") further brings to light the fact that county-endorsed and county-generated development in the area has been proceeding without any adherence to a plan. While a designation of "Sustainable Community " was obtained for the North Laurel/ Savage combined communities more than 2 years ago, not a single grant has been applied for during this 5 year window of funding opportunity. It is long past time for North Laurel and Savage to be empowered to participate in the shaping of their communities.

The past practice of "Bring us a proposal, **any** proposal" is no substitute for a comprehensive vision and plan for the area. Until such a plan is established, a citizen committee to weigh the merits of bids/proposals for the Hurst property would go a long way to assure a better match for the community. Highest bid shouldn't be ignored of course, but it must be weighed against what the bidder has in mind for the site. 'Best and final offers' requests can be used to boost desirable but lower bids.

So many complex 'alphabet soup' new zoning categories have been applied to the area that many highly undesirable outcomes could result which would actually retard future development along the corridor. For example, I can assure you that additional residential development along US1 is NOT desired. If the Route 1

corridor is to remain an economic engine for our tax base, then commercial and industrial properties must not be replaced with residential ones which fail to generate tax dollars adequate to pay for the services they require.

Regards,
Susan Garber
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