

**An Interesting Fall Is Coming**

BRAC, elections, new zoning codes and the old Comprehensive rezoning are some of the issues facing us. *Friends of Harford* will be conducting interviews with all the candidates following the Primary Elections which will be held on September 12<sup>th</sup>. We do not endorse individual candidates, but we try to give you as much information as we possibly can, so you can make an informed decision.

On page 5 of this newsletter, you'll find how your current County Council voted on some of the properties. The wholesale rezoning of the Comprehensive rezoning process is not quite a dead issue. While the entire bill failed, individual properties are now requesting to be rezoned.

BRAC numbers continue to change. FOH is a member of the Task Force making recommendations to the County Executive. As just one voice on the large commission, we have made recommendations of our own which are separate from the Task Force.

Finally, we will give you information on all the candidates and on the new voting procedures.

**Liquid Natural Gas Pipeline**

*Friends of Harford* wrote the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) a letter this June which strongly opposes the application by AES and Mid-Atlantic Express to locate a Liquid Natural Gas Facility at Sparrow's Point, together with an 87 mile long pipeline

through Harford County to the Pennsylvania line for transport of natural gas users outside of the State of Maryland.

Our chief concerns are as follows:

- The people of Dundalk are in danger.
- The potential environmental impacts to the Chesapeake Bay are a significant concern.
- Drinking water. The Big Inch runs from above the dam in the Susquehanna River to Baltimore City, and supplies water to much of Baltimore and Harford County.
- An additional question concerns the proposed placement of the under-river pipeline. Was this to go under the bedrock or under the build up of silt in Conowingo

Lake?

- The people in this area have been living with the risk of the Peach Bottom Nuclear Plant and the potential break-down of the aging Conowingo Dam. Another risk is unacceptable.
- Another large concern is for the safety of the people and property in Harford County along the proposed pathway.
- The proposed route of the pipeline in Harford County comes within feet of, or traverses:
  - Three schools (Fallston Middle, Fallston High, and Youth Benefit Elementary);
  - Numerous recreational fields;
  - Deer Creek watershed;
  - Rocks State Park, open all year and heavily used by our citizens;
  - Our County 4-H Camp which is open year-round;
  - The historic village of Berkley;
  - Historic Hosanna School;
  - Historic Jerusalem Mill, which hosts encampments and thousands of visitors each year;
  - Harford Glen; and
  - Harford County Equestrian Center, which is open all year and hosts hundreds of horse shows and public events, as well as the County fair, each year.

We urged FERC to deny permission for this project.

**VOTE !!**  
**Primary Election**  
**September 12<sup>th</sup>**

See page 3 for details on early voting.

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## **Regional Parks Are Not For Us**

*Friends of Harford* has long been an advocate of more open space whether agricultural land, recreation areas, parks, or walking trails. We lose a bit of our humanity when we divide ourselves so totally from nature that we are forced to be “inside” creatures.

The success of playing fields is its own defense as we see the after school and weekend collection of young people and parents spread over the green grass like bright colored wild flowers.

We do, however, find that the present policy of creating regional county parks outside the Development Envelope is poor design. It presupposes that it is no problem to gas up the family car to take the kids to their games and practices. No bus connections can be expected out side the Development Envelope.

We ask the County to plan “walkable” and “busable” parks inside the Development Envelope. Good planning would spot park land before zoning changes would intensify the density with nearby houses.

We don’t really want a huge recreational active space filled with ball fields, bleachers, lights and acres of paved parking in the middle of a rural area. A 900-car parking lot is not good use of agricultural land. The noise, the lights, the trash would all create a bothersome city atmosphere, another wedge to push farms from the county.

The shortcomings of the past could be solved if the County Land Use Planners and the Developers worked together. Large parcels could be created by regulating where required development open space should be – and it could be in adjoining parcels.

Allowing developers to buy their way out of creating full recreation areas and to use that land for profitable houses instead, has done us no favors. Any good businessman is going to make the best profit decision possible. We look to our government to protect our investment.

Harford County should take the long-range view and buy land where it is needed. Land will not get any cheaper. Our tax dollars would be better spent buying any large parcels inside the envelope where we can have hiking/biking trails leading to it. We should put our active recreation parks where we need them – where the people live.

## **Base Realignment Realities**

First and foremost, we must thank County Executive Craig for choosing *Friends of Harford* as a member of the BRAC Task Force. The following letter

was addressed to Mr. Craig and is based upon the draft position of the Land Use subcommittee on which FOH sat. FOH has not been given a copy of the final report. We can only assume it will remain essentially the same as the final draft we were given.

We suggest that the Committee membership has no citizens independent of the development community and others with a vested financial interest in expansion. *Friends of Harford* stands alone.

The featured presenters (with the exception of those from the county government), although knowledgeable in their fields, had interest in further development. In spite of the importance of our location to the Bay, no one from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation was solicited for advice.

The gratuitous comment in the report reads, “However, the Subcommittee noted that the opportunities for commercial, retail and office development and redevelopment should exist throughout the County and not just along Route 40.” **This comes as a surprise as the subcommittee minutes should reflect that the members supported no push for development outside the Development Envelope. FOH would strongly object if this document were to be used to rezone more land outside of the Development Envelope to Commercial or Intense Residential uses.** This appears to be a direct attempt to open Route 22 and possibly other rural settings. The process should be to use the Development Envelope with a great deal of forethought and not to hand out “development opportunities” outside of it.

## **KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

*Friends of Harford* certainly supports sustaining and enhancing the quality of life while meeting the residential and non-residential impacts of BRAC. In fact, this must be primary in county planning so that the present residents are not pushed aside to accommodate someone else’s vision of BRAC development. The annexation of Aberdeen beyond Route 95 and the consequent reaction of its citizens show the seriousness of the problem.

We concur also with the remaining five challenges: 2) improving Route 40, 3) creating livable communities around hubs, 4) attracting diverse land uses consistent with County Land Use policies, 5) balancing growth with revitalization and 6) coordinating with municipalities.

## NEEDS

Number 1 identifies the need for planning and zoning tools to establish quality standards in our communities. If this refers to the Zoning Code and Design Standards revision, we strongly agree.

Number 2 addresses promotional resources to educate the development community and property owners on redevelopment and revitalization opportunities. Again, we agree, **if this is limited to the Development Envelope.**

Number 3: *Friends of Harford* would have to look at the “County, State, and National Programs” indicated as a need. We are amenable to new ideas, but not indiscriminately.

Number 4 requires that this committee would like to see enhanced evaluation and monitoring of land opportunities and constraints for residential and non-residential development. There is no problem here, if the same information were to be made available to all interested parties.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Again, *Friends of Harford* agrees totally with revising and updating Harford County’s Development Regulations. BRAC should challenge us to do this **very carefully.**

Use of “economic and administrative tools” raises a caution. This should not be an opportunity to “bring everything to Harford County.” BRAC is not an unmixed blessing and that truth is beginning to sink into the consciousness of the general public. The Office of Economic Development could be more wisely used to slow or filter the speed of auxiliary development. We are past the need to let a Clorox Company locate in Zone One of the Perryman Well Field.

We should, however, promote redevelopment within the Development Envelope. **We disagree totally that this should be throughout the County.** The presence of an old building should not invite a larger newer one.

The Committee appears to recommend that the County’s “capital improvement” should guide the land use policy. **That would be wrong.** It is rather that good land

use policy also effects good capital gain, but capital gain should not steer policy which may be counter-productive to the residents in that area, to the environment, or to the future of Harford County.

Public input is a necessity. A paternalistic approach may be quicker, but to act counter to the prevailing will of the public is disastrous (reference Aberdeen).

The Committee was worried about the inability to balance new growth opportunities without sacrificing revitalization. *Friends of Harford* would limit the use of greenfields, particularly rezoned farmland until

revitalization had first been used. Look East to the tremendous opportunity for revitalization at Bainbridge. This could save our farms.

Concensus building is time consuming, but a necessity. If that means some developers

become impatient, so be it.

Since number 1 of this section is non-specific, FOH would replace it with: **The ability to facilitate development by using the natural features to enrich new communities, and building without harming the long term balance in the environment of Harford County and the Bay.** Certainly, we must save the wetlands.

FOH recognizes that new homes will be needed, but if the problem is handled regionally (note Bainbridge), we have time to build rationally and with care. Building too much too soon, will merely fill up the houses and leave the coming BRAC residents to use more of our precious land. Please slow down and plan first.

We have enjoyed being a part of this endeavor through Sue Rice. We will continue to work with the County and the building community to use the best of the new ideas to create livable communities which will last long beyond BRAC. At bottom, we all love this County.

## NEW THIS YEAR: EARLY VOTING!

If you have plans to be out of town over election day, consider voting early, or by absentee ballot:

**The 2005 Annual report for Harford County states that 2,189 residential building permits were issued last year.**  
**The US Census Bureau says 2,659 permits were issued. Either number says that this certainly was a banner year for growth in the County.**

Early Voting : Anyone registered as a Harford County voter can vote early. If you are new to the area and need to register to vote you can do so in person at an election office, or by mail. To get a Voter Registration Application visit [www.elections.state.md.us](http://www.elections.state.md.us) or call SBE at 1-800-222-8683. The deadline to register to vote is August 22, 2006 for the Primary Election and October 17, 2006 for the General Election.

Early voting will be available for the : **PRIMARY ELECTION:** Tuesday, September 5, 2006 to Saturday, September 9, 2006

**GENERAL ELECTION:** Tuesday October 31, 2006 to Saturday, November 4, 2006.

Early voting locations will be open continuously from 7am-8pm. Early voting locations in Harford County: Bel Air Library, Aberdeen Branch Library and Joppa Branch Library.

#### **ABSENTEE VOTING :**

Registered voters of Harford County may apply to vote by absentee ballot if qualified. If circumstances require that you continuously vote by absentee ballot, you must apply anew each election year. A single application can be completed for both the Primary and General Election.

**TO APPLY:** To apply for an absentee ballot you must complete and submit an application for absentee voting. An application can be obtained by: **MAIL** - Call the Election Office and request an absentee application at 410-638-3565. **IN PERSON** - At the Harford County Election Office, 133 Industry Lane, Forest Hill, Maryland 21050. **ONLINE** - To obtain a form online visit the State Board of Elections website. To obtain additional information in reference to the Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act (UOCAVA), visit their web site at <http://www.fvap.gov/>.

**NOTE:** Once you apply and receive an absentee ballot, that is how you must vote for that election. Even if your plans change, you will not be able to vote at the polls.

**APPLICATION DEADLINE:** The deadline for receipt of the completed application by mail or fax 410-638-3310 to the Election Office, except for persons who qualify under number one above, is the Tuesday before the election. After the deadline, application must be made in person using the absentee ballot late application provisions.

**LATE ABSENTEE VOTING:** After the Tuesday preceding an election and on election day, a person who finds they will be unable to vote at the polls on election day may come to the Election Office in person to receive

their ballot or designate in writing, another Harford County voter to act as their agent to obtain an absentee ballot. *(Printed from the Board of Elections website.)*

#### **Comprehensive Rezoning Final Tally**

We have listed seventy-three of the 383 Comprehensive rezoning issues starting on the next page. Even though every rezoning request has been denied with the overturning of the entire Rezoning bill, these votes by our County Council still stand. The final zoning granted by the Council voting is highlighted.

In attempt to make it easier for you to understand what happened, we have arranged the Issues first by district and then by amendment categories. The bill was to either endorse the zoning given in the "P&Z (Actual Column)" or amend it to change Planning & Zoning's recommendation for that property. An (S) shows the sponsor of the amendment. An (S) with a zoning category next to it, shows a different zoning classification approved than from any previously listed for that property.

If you agree or disagree with how your Council representatives voted, call them, write them or email them. Three from this Council will not be running for re-election this Fall: Bob Cassilly, Lance Miller and Cecilia Stepp. We'll list all the candidates for you after the Rezoning log. Contact the candidates and ask them how they would have voted. They may well get the opportunity later.

#### **Rezoning Again**

We are sure that many of the owners of these properties will be asking for rezoning. Currently, a few have started the new process. Individual rezoning cases application fees can cost from around \$1,000 to \$2,000 each as opposed to the blanket \$100 in the Comprehensive rezoning process. Each property rezoning request must be reviewed by the Department of Planning & Zoning and also by the People's Counsel Citizens Advisory Board. This allows representation for any opponent should the Advisory Board and/or the People's Counsel decide the case merits the use of the tax-paid lawyer. Each zoning request is heard individually by the County's Hearing Examiner. Anyone may testify at that public hearing where only the one issue is heard rather than the cattle-call type hearing where all 383 properties were heard at one time. Each decision made by the Hearing Examiner may be appealed individually on the merits of the case. The County Council sits as the Zoning Board of Appeals.