

May 25, 2022

Hon. Rueben B. Collins, President  
Charles County Board of Commissioners  
County Government Building  
200 Baltimore St.  
La Plata, MD 20646

Re: Septic Tier Map Amendment – Newburg

Dear President Collins and Commissioners:

As you may be aware, Walton has owned and managed a property comprising some 506 acres, located along Edge Hill Road and Popes Creek Road, on the west side of U.S. Hwy. 301, for the last 11 years, investing millions of dollars in its purchase, engineering studies, and of course local and State taxes, while we patiently awaited the time when it might be transformed into a viable, long-term economic development for Charles County. Our land – and most of the other land that is the subject of the matter before you – is currently zoned RC, and it would require a full rezoning to see it developed for any economically viable use. Zoning is a lengthy and open public process, that takes a cue from the underlying comprehensive plans.

We were quite **encouraged** to learn that a Sub-Area Plan for the Newburg portion of Charles County was slated to commence in the very near term, and we also **supported** the conclusion of the Planning Commission when it recommended **against** downgrading the Septic Tier Map for our land, along with additional land surrounding it. For the reasons articulated below, and by others, we wish to be on the record in opposition to the matter before you now, which would in fact propose to downgrade the Septic Tier Map for some 900 acres of land from Tier 2 to Tier 4, notwithstanding the Planning Commission's recommendation **against** doing so while the Sub-Area Plan is pending.

The Sub-Area Plan process is the most appropriate mechanism for evaluating the broad planning goals for the local market and has long been embedded in the County's protocol for shaping the future growth in its various planning areas. A change to the Tier Map ahead of such an involved planning exercise would be premature, and in fact, could thwart the ultimate goals that might come out of that Sub-Area Planning process – including Desirable Future Land Uses, Smart Growth, and of course Retail Stores and Public Amenities for Charles County.

There is real and current market interest from retail, commercial, and industrial users in this area, which would translate into major economic development benefits for Charles County, and the surrounding community. Additionally, there is strong interest from high-end Active Adult community developers in this idyllic area at the gateway into Maryland from Virginia. Without water and sewer options, these attractive uses cannot occur. Any growth – including those uses that are ultimately established as the County's official and desired goals through the Sub-Area Plan – would be rendered impossible if this Tier Map change goes into effect.

Furthermore, correcting this mismatch would take many years to overcome. Nearby land value appreciation for the citizens of Charles County would be greatly reduced by those delays, and such an out-of-order downgrade would delay the delivery of desired public amenities, and retail stores for the local community. Carefully planned residential **may** be a part of the outcome of the Sub-Area Plan but we would respectfully implore you to work in ways aimed at ensuring more local dollars are spent in Charles County, Maryland, rather than sending those local dollars out of the County, or worse, across the bridge into Virginia. A Tier Map downgrade at this time is a significant issue that should not be taken lightly or acted upon quickly.

While a Tier Map downgrade might seem on its face to be a solution prevent more of what is coming from the aging and failing wastewater treatment facility nearby, the real solution is much more likely to come from thoughtfully planned, smart growth, that will provide the funding and opportunity for that system to be improved and upgraded. This in turn would improve the health of the watershed and surrounding natural environment. Walton seeks to be an active participant in the solving these issues, and also in bringing viable, long-term economic development to Charles County.

I grew up in Maryland and spent the first 50 years of my life in the Greater Washington, D.C. area, and I care deeply about our mission to create the highest quality developments across Walton's portfolio. My colleagues and I are all committed to working with the County to achieve that end, together.

In closing, we would respectfully request that you cast your votes consistently with the recommendation of the Planning Commission, and that you **decline** to change the Tier Map at this time. If you are not prepared to take such action this evening, we would ask that you at a minimum, keep the record open for 60-90 days, if not longer, to allow the affected property owners and other interested parties to be fully heard and taken into consideration.

Very truly yours,



David L. Peter  
Executive Vice President