

BoCC Public Comment 6/11/2024

Good evening,

I'd like to thank Commissioner Bowling for his recent Town Hall where residents were given the opportunity to express their concerns about the proposed amendments to Docket 250 for the Villages at Swan Point. It is nice to know that we are not just howling into the wind when we raise concerns and provide factual testimony about issues.

However, a town hall is not a forum where the public's factual testimony and concerns can be deliberated. That open deliberation of testimony should begin at the Planning Commission's work session when they determine the findings of fact that inform their decision in an administrative decision, or their recommendation to you in a legislative proceeding.

Public Participation is one of the 12 visions of planning. In Charles County there is the ~~strong~~ perception, held by much of the public, that our testimony is reduced to a numbers game, where the *quantity* of the testimony is more important than the *quality* of the testimony. This perception is reinforced by the fact that, when submitting written testimony online, we are required to state whether we are for, against, or neutral on the issue. The answer to this question has no bearing on the quality, and factual basis of the testimony.

The public has the right to have the factual evidence we submit be openly debated, and to have the decision makers adequately articulate the basis for their decisions.

Too often, a work-session occurs without a discussion of factual testimony submitted. Since the record is closed before the work-session begins, the public is left with no recourse but accept that their testimony was a futile

must be removed from Docket 250. In the PC's letter recommending approval of Docket 250, this testimony was reduced to being a verbal comment opposed to the amendment using the term "view corridor". There was no discussion of this fact during the PC's deliberations.

The issue of View corridors is an easy one to correct in Docket 250. Others like the height and width of Swan Point Blvd demand much further open deliberation and study.

When the PC fails to deliberate on the factual testimony submitted by the public, or adequately articulate the basis for their decision, their recommendation to you is inadequate, at best, and puts a much greater burden on you.

Like the appellate court of Maryland, you should find that the Charles County Planning Commission had failed to **articulate adequately the basis for this recommendation**, and send it back to the PC for further proceeding consistent with the American Planning Association's *Decision Making Principals*.

Submitted by:

Nancy Schertler

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For Docket 250