

10/17/2024

RE; (ZTA)23-176, (ZTA) 23-02

Board of Charles County Commissioners,

I'd like to thank you for reducing the scope of your initial proposal for rezoning the lands around Maryland Airport. While it's a big step in the right direction, I believe there are other areas in need of reconsideration.

On Ray Drive, you've proposed rezoning lots owned and occupied by existing businesses to IG. However, you have included two additional lots adjacent to these businesses which have never been occupied or utilized commercially. One of these lots has an active stream, the other parcel is 90% undevelopable, and both consist largely of steep slopes and ravines which feed into the Mattawoman Creek or wetlands, and should remain protected by WCD.

The Environmental Constraints map in your proposal shows the southeastern lands owned by PSM consists of only a small percentage of high ground, made up of ridges and plateaus. These are isolated by very steep slopes and creeks, making them extremely difficult to access, which is why they've remained undeveloped.

Proposing that the southernmost section of the Airport property should ever become a Business Park indicates a lack of understanding of the complexities of the terrain. Commissioner Bowling's instincts were correct on July 9th, when he stated that this area should be placed in WCD. Business Park zoning here was a mistake in the first place, and this is the perfect time to correct it. This environmentally sensitive area has never been utilized in any commercial capacity and it never should be. This land adjoins the Myrtle Grove forest, and includes the northern border of the Lily Pond. Every drop of water that flows from the Airport, from creeks to stormwater, meanders through this section of land. Here it can filter naturally, before filling the Lily Pond and becoming one of the most visible, and most visited, natural attractions along the Indian Head Rail Trail.

I urge you to visit these areas that you've proposed converting from wooded lots, into parking lots. Climate change is real, for whatever reasons, with storms and flooding increasing every year. This isn't the time to be writing off so many acres of sensitive woodlands. We can, and must, do better than this, future generations are depending on us. Minimize commercial rezoning, limit it to accessible high ground, and see if there is any demand for it this time. When the previous industrial zoning was in effect, no new business related to the airport moved into Western Charles County, but thousands of new tax paying residents did. This rezoning is neither needed nor wanted by the vast majority of local residents. Remember, one reason many people live here and not in Waldorf, is because of wild and scenic areas like this.

At the conclusion of the Public Hearing on July 9th, the Planning Committee was instructed to take another look at the map and make an effort to address some public concerns. The Planning Commission then did an admirable job of adjusting to the north, the southeastern border of the PSM owned property proposed to become ABP, keeping over 40 acres in WCD. Possibly as a tradeoff, they converted another 2-acre lot along Ray Drive to IG. However, for some reason, they did not even address the conversion of

the 2 above mentioned non-commercially used parcels from WCD to IG zoning. When they presented this to you at the Commissioners Board Meeting on October 29th, their whole package was rejected. If one part of their suggestion wasn't acceptable, does it all need to be rejected?

I don't feel that this matter should move forward as is, there's just too much at stake. As I've said repeatedly, all the businesses currently operating on Ray Drive are operating legally by being grandfathered in. Let them continue as such, and support them in their future endeavors, but leave the whole Ray Drive Corridor in WCD.

I'd also like to request that the record remain open for 60 days, as this meet was scheduled on such short notice, some people may not have been able to comment yet.

Thanks,

Glenn McAfee