

9/30/21

Subject: Follow Up: Amendment to the COMP Plan – Land Surrounding MD Airport Hearing

Listed below are several reasons why public participation was difficult along with the public notice not matching the actual steps involved to give testimony.

The Public Notice says: To speak during the Sept 22, 2021, Public Hearing, residents must call 301-885-2779 between 8:00 am and 4:00 pm on Sept 22 to register. Once registered, residents **will be called** between 6:00 pm – 9:00 pm on Sept 22 to testify. **The public notice fails to put in writing that once you call 301-885-2779 you will be sent an email several hours later. You will no longer be called on your telephone when it is your turn to speak (the County changed this process in June 2021). Also, the public comment form was not viewable prior to the hearing. This lacks transparency.** When a person Registers it should include the ability to listen and/or speak. Not just listen.

Monday, Sept 20, two days prior to the hearing I called 301-885-2779 to confirm the actual process to speak and asked where to find the public comment form on the county website. I checked several times prior to this week and the form was not viewable. The BOCC clerk was off so I was transferred to Michaelina. She said she could not answer any of my questions but would find out and either call me or send an email. I never received a response. Tuesday, Sept 21, I called back and received a voice message again that the BOCC clerk was still off. I texted the clerk and she called immediately. She explained to speak you must call the day of the hearing. The BOCC clerk confirmed (by both of us looking on the county website) that the public comment form was “missing” and NOT viewable. She admitted it must be a “GLITCH” and she would get it fixed, less than 2 hours it was viewable. She said the public comment form has been open since August 22 BUT if the form isn’t viewable how can the public comment? Wednesday, Sept 22, the morning of the hearing I spoke to Donna. I was informed of my number in line to speak and I would receive an email in about 3 hours. *Prior to this I was told the county would call me with no mention of sending me an email.* Four hours later, I still did not receive an email. I called back and Donna said since I registered on Sept. 18, the system would not send an email to me but it had been annotated and would not be an issue. I was also informed that all of my issue’s were sent to the head county attorney, Wes Adams and the record would be kept open due to all of the problems. I asked how long the record would be extended and was told that it was up to legal to decide.

Now, to the evening of the scheduled hearing. The first 2 people who spoke mentioned problems they experienced to give testimony. Commissioner, Reubin Collins stated people giving testimony should stick to the guidelines and moving forward any comments need to be limited to the public hearing itself. I feel his comment influenced other speakers to stop from mentioning their challenges. This is public suppression. We get 3 minutes to testify and when we talk about the topic and then mention a problem

the BOCC should listen and fix the problem, not ridicule speakers who took time out of their busy schedules to speak.

The final vote by the BOCC was to keep the record open for 8 days. I do not believe my issue's or anyone else that experienced a problem were given consideration to keep the record open longer than 8 short days. The agenda was overscheduled with three public hearings, the amendment to the COMP Plan being last. Surely the BOCC knew this would have quite a few speakers in attendance, it should have been one hearing for this date.

The process to sign up is not consistent with the BOCC, BOA and PC hearings. Why aren't they all the same? I do not recall any Public Notice indicating the BOCC process changed in June 2021.

Lastly, I checked on the Charles County website to read the Public comments for this hearing on 9/29/21. The comments that include a pdf file cannot be opened to read. How is this transparent to the public? A thorough review of the Public Notice process and the ability to make it easy for the public to participate is highly recommended.

I look forward to seeing a lot of improvements.

Anne Stark