



THE FREEDOM

INFORMER

A Publication of FACC / Freedom Area Citizens' Council

www.freedomareacitizens.com

April 2002

Meetings of interest to the Freedom Area

April 16, 9:00 a.m.:

Planning & Zoning Comm. Mtg.
Carroll Co. Office Bldg., Rm. 003,
No Freedom Area items listed.

April 24, 7:00 p.m.:

League of Women Voters Meeting
Carroll Comm. College, Rm. L287
Guest speaker: John Frece,
Dir. of Communications,
MD. Office of Smart Growth.
Mr. Frece will speak on "An
Overview of Maryland's Smart
Growth Initiative."

April 29, 9:00 a.m.:

Subdivision Advisory Committee Meeting,
County Office Bldg., Rm. 003
Raincliff Center, 177-unit multi-
family project. Co. file #T-02-0125
NE corner of Raincliff Rd./MD 32

April 29, 7:00 p.m.:

A Town Meeting about Education
featuring Comm. Dell and Frazier,
Dels. Elliott, Amedori, and Getty
and Senator Ferguson
Board of Education Bldg.
125 N. Court Street, Westminster

April 30, 9:30 a.m.:

Board of Zoning Appeals Meeting
Carroll Co. Office Bldg.
Conditional use to permit commu-
nications tower.
2421 Arthur Ave., Sykesville.

May 1, 7:00 p.m.:

Baltimore Regional Partnership Meeting
"Visions 2030" -- A public meeting
on future transportation needs and
land-use in the Baltimore region,
Sykesville Middle School.

FACC asks county: what's Plan B?

At its March 2002 meeting, the FACC's Board of Directors moved to formally ask Carroll County: what the County will do should the Freedom Water Treatment Plant at Liberty Reservoir fail? (See text of letter on page 4.)

The FACC criticized county officials for their "failure to adequately manage water issues in South Carroll."

Repeated warnings of drought and decisions made by the County Commissioners over the last few years left the FACC Board with little confidence that the county could manage an emergency in the coming months.

In that period the County has decided:

- To cancel a contract to connect already drilled wells to the distribution system.
- Spent well over a million dollars to prepare for construction of a water treatment plant at Piney Run

BZA okays retirement community

On March 27, the Board of Zoning Appeals approved a conditional use permit for a 160-unit retirement community on 11 acres at Marvin Ave. and Ridge Road in Eldersburg by a 3-0 vote. Condominium units in the development will cost between \$135,000 and \$145,000. Williamsburg Village, as it will be called, will next need to go to the Planning Commission for a site plan review.

- Refused to negotiate with Baltimore City to increase the amount of water that the County can take from Liberty Reservoir.

- Decided not to impose mandatory usage restrictions in Carroll even though the Governor urged users in Central Maryland to conserve.

In addition, comments about the capabilities of pumping/filtering equipment at the Freedom Plant by County staff during recent public work sessions on the county's draft Water and Sewer Master Plan did not provide a feeling of confidence. This proposed Plan was written by county staff in response to letters from the Maryland Department of the Environment related to the county's request for permits for construction of the Piney Run plant.

In response to the FACC letter, the *Carroll County Times* reported that county staff would react immediately in the face of an emergency, quoting the Director of Public Works, Doug Myers, as saying "we would get the tanker trucks in and start hauling water."

Commissioner Julia Gouge commented that, "We ... need to let people down there know what our plans are for a disaster. Right now there is no plan and I am very concerned. ... If I had my way those plans would already be in place."

Commissioners Dell and Frazier on the other hand, still don't see that there is a problem.

Water storage tanks in South Carroll contain approximately one day's supply of water -- primarily for fire protection and emergencies.

Growth:

A matter of perspective ...

"In spite of all the talk, people need to know the following: From 1990 to 1995, 16,500 people moved to Carroll County. From 1995 to 2000, 10,900 moved to Carroll County or 5,600 people less or a drop of 33.93 percent. From 1995 to 2000, [there were] 6,600 residential use and occupancy permits issued. The State of Maryland has a deficit, which means less funds to the counties. To try and count growth (permits) at this time is financially irresponsible. ... New home interest rates are the lowest in approximately 30 years. ... \$200,000 is the break-even point for the county. Many homes now are selling over that, and the income would be above average with more taxes for many years to come. Growth will come. Like it or not. If you try to stop the growth in towns [community planning areas] it will go into the remainder of the county at a greater rate than now. ... The buyer will choose where they buy as they have done in the past and will in the future."

Maurice E. (Ed) Wheatley
Carroll County Times

"The season for misinformation has begun. Ed Wheatley quotes the discredited statistic that a house costing more than \$200,000 generates more revenue than it creates in costs. No doubt he is just counting some of the costs of residency, not all, and using the mythical 0.55 children per household. In fact, NEW housing will average more like 2 children of school age. The direct cost to educate these children will be at least \$5000 per year. ... Now, what revenue to the County school system from that residence will cover the \$10,000 per year cost? Remember the school system only gets half of the county budget. The rest goes for roads, utilities, fire, police, ambulance, recreation and parks, etc.

So to cover the cost of educating those two children, that new family will have to pay at least \$20,000 in county taxes. The county only gets about a third of the state income tax paid by the family. The annual property tax on a \$200,000 house will be no more than \$3,000. Impact fees are a one-shot deal. So where does the revenue come from?"

John Culleton
Sykesville

And a glimmer of hope ...

These two quotations represent the widely divergent views of growth that exist in the community. The first reaffirms the fallacy prevalent in the county government that fiscal responsibility depends on residential growth. It is a reaffirmation of the dictum that failing to plan is planning to fail, ironically by a member of the Planning Commission. The second reaffirms the inevitability of tax increases to support unmanaged growth.

However, a recent proposal by the County Attorney, Kimberly Millender, represents a glimmer of hope. Ms. Millender told the Commissioners on March 28th that the county has reached the point where school construction plans for the next six years do not promise enough relief for overcrowded schools in South Carroll. County planners will, therefore, tell the developers of four subdivisions that building permits will be denied until the situation is improved.

Holt, Herman to speak at FACC meeting

Robert Holt, President of the South Carroll Business Association will speak at the next FACC meeting, Tuesday April 16, 2002 at the Carrolltowne Center at 7 p.m.

Jonathan Herman, mayor of Sykesville, will also speak. Mr. Herman will talk about progress on the Warfield Complex and issues of importance to Sykesville.

Commentary:

When does vision for the future become part of reality?

It is not a mystery that South Carroll has been the target for growth for more than a decade. What seems to be a mystery is why the Carroll Commissioners continue to increase growth in an area where the lack of public facilities is blatantly obvious?

The recent delay of four developments should not warrant any awards for the current Board. Rather, the question should become: why isn't the Concurrency Management Ordinance being instituted on a routine basis? This is evidenced by prior reports that the Board has ignored required limitations on previous occasions. It would also be beneficial if they were disclosed. Is there any reason why the names and locations of the developments need to become a guessing game?

I believe that Susan Krebs [President of the Carroll County Board of Education] said it best: "Slowing ... growth should have been going on all along."

Water management ranks at the top of the list of considerations. A reservoir that is quickly becoming a wasteland due to continuous drought conditions needs to be written into the equation. In an area where nearly 30,000 people rely on one main water source, when does the threat of drought become significant enough for the Board of Commissioners to take action?

While this development delay is seemingly a step in the right direction, it is still another sign that this Board continues to manage by crisis.

The real issue is vision for the future. When will it become part of reality?

Betty Smith
Westminster
Mrs. Smith is a candidate for
Carroll County Commissioner

**Commentary:
Getting the big picture**

While I know that water is virtually on fire in South Carroll, I'd like to suggest that the issue is only symptomatic of the bigger picture of a far more serious condition--lack of representation in local Government.

Failure to communicate with the governed may be the biggest failing of the current Board of Commissioners. We have all read the news articles that show a breakdown in cohesive planning efforts among the eight municipalities and County government. The situation is compounded ten fold for the Freedom Community Planning Area because there is no official representation for the 30,000 residents there. Instead, County Government treats the area like its personal pawn, controlling water, sewer, and building permits and not doing such a hot job at any of the three.

The answer to the problem is not all that complex--it is a matter of County government recognizing that fundamental issues of governance must reflect contemporary circumstances. As with many issues of modern government, the answer may lie with looking around the USA to see how other jurisdictions deal with similar concerns. In this instance we need not look so far for the solution as it may lie within a Carroll County Coun-

cil of Governments. Such a body would require more work on the part of all the governments participating but we're not dealing with the more simplistic issues of the 1960s. Growth can continue to ignore boundaries or we can take a unified approach that recognizes we're all in it together and that growth requires managing.

Including representation-less South Carroll in this equation can either be complex or simple, depending on how hard we want to find a solution. I believe the approach must be taken in steps and the first big one consists of simply pulling up an extra chair to the table of government to speak for those 30,000 residents there. How badly you residents want formal representation in local government, perhaps to have your own government, is up to you. How residents would determine who would represent them in a Council of Governments needs defining but it is not so difficult a task if the next Board of Commissioners encourages, even facilitates, such an accommodation.

The answer for many of the problems encountered in South Carroll lies in basic communications and being given an irrevocable voice at the table of local government. The means lies as close as an election.

Neil Ridgely
Finksburg

Mr. Ridgely is a candidate for
Carroll County Commissioner

Look before you leap

When my husband and I decided to move years ago we researched the school systems of different counties, checked out housing prices, found out how much house we could afford, and compared loan rates.

After choosing Sykesville we rented a duplex for six months to make sure we wanted to live in this area..

As parents, responsible for the health, safety and welfare of our four children, we are obligated to examine the facts, and weigh outcomes before making decisions.

County Commissioners have a similar responsibility. Citizens have spent countless hours in the last few years attending hearings and meetings protesting hasty or ill conceived decisions made by the Commissioners.

The proposed Piney Run Treatment Plant, ZORC amendment, and the purchase of property for many times its value are just a few examples of poor decisions made by the commissioners that waste time and money.

We must demand that our elected officials use all their resources before making decisions, or as my grandmother used to say, "Look before you leap!"

Jeannie Nichols,
Sykesville

Mrs. Nichols is a candidate for
Carroll County Commissioner

USE THIS FORM TO JOIN OR TO RENEW MEMBERSHIP FOR 2002!

FACC is a non-profit community organization.

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Are you a member of a Homeowners' Association? _____ If so, which HOA? _____

I would be interested in offering assistance with:

Legal Affairs Membership Schools Publications

Government Media Relations Other: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Check No.: _____

New membership

Renewal

Annual Membership Fee: \$10.00 per year per household

Please make checks payable to FACC. Mail to: FACC, P.O. Box 142, Sykesville, MD 21784

FACC
P.O. Box 142
Eldersburg, MD 21784

NON-PROFIT
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
SYKESVILLE, MD
PERMIT #130



**DO YOUR PART
AS A CITIZEN!**

**Next FACC meeting:
7 p.m. Tues. Apr. 16th, 2002
Carrolltown Center**

Minutes of the Mar. 19, 2002 Meeting of FACC

Opening Activities:

The Chairman Mike Naused called the meeting to order at 7:15 PM. The following Board members were recorded as present: P. Bennett, N. Davis, C. Dugan, C. Dodson, R. Dangle, T McCarron, R. Nacewicz, C. Naused, M. Naused, K. Plante, D. Reid, P. Seiter, D. Slack, G. Tirado and M. Weber.

The Chairman announced that a letter had been received from the County Planning Department indicating that instead of developing an amendment to the Water and Sewer Master Plan the focus will be on developing a new plan. It identified May as the target for completion of the new plan.

Guest Speaker:

Mrs. Jeannie Nichols was introduced as the speaker for the evening and her

topic was "Sprawl". Mrs. Nichols is serving her third term as a member of the Sykesville Town Council. She has been a strong supporter of the development of the Warfield portion of Springfield Hospital grounds and is an announced candidate for Carroll County Board of Commissioners.

In her talk she discussed the development patterns in the metropolitan Baltimore areas from 1900 to the present; the impact of Ozone, a product of auto exhausts, and the impact of ozone on health and the population in our area. Among the recommendations were the clustering of homes to preserve open space and minimizing auto use by encouraging walking. She responded to a number of questions on a range of subjects, including Impact Fees, indicating that development should pay its way.

Closing Activities:

The Chairman read a list of those who have filed to run in the fall election for Commissioners and

House of Delegates. He went on to recognize noteworthy guests present.

George Horvath reported on approval of the proposed Princess Shopping Center by the Planning and Zoning commission earlier in the day. He reported that the SHA recommended a full service entrance permitting both right and left turn access to the shopping center from Liberty Road and a right-in, right-out turn on Sykesville Road. This will involve reducing the length of the existing median on Liberty Road by about 45 feet. A traffic light is expected to be installed by the developer at this entrance although not at the time of construction.

Chairman announced that the FACC web site is up and running at www.freedomareacitizens.com.

Chairman also announced that Pam Seiter, long-time member of the board and current Treasurer will be leaving South Carroll for the Eastern Shore this summer.

Ken Plante, Secretary

What's Plan B?

At its March 2002 meeting, the Board of Directors of the Freedom Area Citizens' Council voted to send a letter to the Carroll County Board of Commissioners asking: How would the county react to an emergency at the Freedom water treatment plant? In other words, what's Plan B if everything doesn't go right? What happens if a pump or filter fails at peak use? The text of this letter appears below. (See the article on page 1 of this issue of *The Informer*.)

March 20, 2002

Carroll County Board of Commissioners
225 N. Center Street
Westminster, MD 21157

Commissioners:

The Freedom Area Citizens' Council by unanimous vote of its Board of Directors and on behalf of affected citizens of South Carroll implores you to put an emergency water contingency plan in place should a critical failure occur at the Freedom Water Treatment Plant at Liberty Reservoir.

This action is necessary due to the continued failure of this Board of Commissioners to adequately manage water issues in S. Carroll. The following reasons are cited as contributing to the need for an emergency back up plan to ensure public health and safety:

1. The Board's decision to forego development of the existing wells in Sykesville, which could have been online this summer as a backup source of almost 1 million gallons a day, has left the Freedom Area with Liberty Reservoir as its only source of drinking water for over 7,000 homes in the Freedom Area.
2. The Board has continually postponed necessary upgrades and modernization of the water treatment plant at Liberty Reservoir, while allowing demands on its capacity to spiral out of control. Nor has the Board made any attempt to negotiate an increased draw from Liberty Reservoir together with funding for an upgrade in the capacity of the Freedom plant.
3. In spite of severe drought warnings across the state, neither the Board of Commissioners nor the Dept. of Public Works has made any effort whatsoever to encourage conservation through voluntary or involuntary methods. In addition, there is no disaster recovery plan in place should mechanical breakdown, sabotage or contamination interrupt service at the Freedom plant requiring a week or more downtime to repair.
4. It is a fact that last summers peak demand nearly crippled the Freedom plant, as it was taxed to provide maximum peak capacity. This year, thanks to unbridled development and ineffective concurrency management, new homes and large commercial users will considerably increase the peak strain on the plant.

We ask that the development of a water contingency plan receive your immediate attention. We ask also that the plan be fully operational and communicated publicly as soon as possible to assure residents that this important health and safety issue has been addressed prior to the upcoming summer months.

Sincerely,

/s/

Mike Naused, Chairman
Freedom Area Citizens' Council