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To: Francoise Carrier <francoise.carrier@mncppc-mc.org>

Subject: Clarksburg amendment

Dear Francoise & Board Members,

I write with reluctance on the Clarksburg amendment. I appreciate as few can the complications of the matter before you, but hope that I can offer a perspective from one that has walked in your shoes. You undoubtedly heard much cogent testimony on the facts and the issues they raise. I will not recite them here but turn instead to more fundamental considerations.

The Clarksburg amendment is one of those rare occasions when you are called upon to make a legacy decision--one that will characterize your reputations as trustees of the future of the county. There have been only a few of these occasions in the long history of the Planning Board. They include adoption of the General Plan; creation of the stream valley park system; decisions about the future of strategic activity centers such as Bethesda, Silver Spring, and White Flint; creation of the Agricultural Reserve; establishment of Little Seneca Lake as a regional emergency water supply reservoir; and modernization of the zoning code.

You will decide if you will be known as the board that defiled that last clean watershed in the county for development of no lasting significance and certain harm, or as stewards of the land and a resource that your predecessors established and have protected for a generation at no little cost to the taxpayers of the county.

Yours is a more important decision than those I mentioned above because the nature of it places you in a different moral position than the normal planning or development decision that comes before you. In most cases, you are simply making a decision about the regulation of private property and its impact on others. Here you are the guardians of the property most affected by your decision; property the commission bought and manages with public funds; property you hold in trust for the benefit of the public. The concept of public trust is as old as the Roman Republic and deeply imbedded in the common law. It holds that each generation has a duty to pass on to those that follow the common resources of the public in shape as good as it received them.

In the future scheme of things, it matters little whether there are 1000 houses more or less in Clarksburg, or several hundreds of thousands of square feet of other stuff. It matters greatly where they are put and how it affects the future of the place and the critical resources of the watershed and lake. It matters whether the Planning Board abandons the people of Clarksburg Town Center and makes it even harder and longer than it has been thus far to complete its market and civic core.

I urge you, therefore, to beware of excuses for actions that seem to satisfy or pacify today's competing voices and reach for solid scientific and moral justifications for actions that address the future of place and region. What else is a planning board for?

Respectfully,

Royce