



Council Ignores Citizen Input on Attainable Housing Bill



On October 7 the Anne Arundel County Council pushed through the Attainable Housing Bill 72-24 with little consideration of citizen objections.

At the October 7 County Council meeting the Attainable Housing Bill 72-24 was passed along party lines without amendment. In the following paragraphs end note links in square brackets will connect to the appropriate segment of the meeting video recording. Highlights of citizen input on the Bill were:

CE Pittman sent a message to the Council suggesting that the bill be held [1] and/or amended to address changes in density and open space in developments with no MPDUs. He said that he would sign the bill, if passed, but immediately convene an advisory committee to consider changes to be introduced before the bill takes effect in eight months.

Arundel Rivers testified that changes in density in non-MPDU parcels and impervious surface needed amendment [2]. It submitted proposed amendments that would address density and environmental issues, but still retain the MPDU requirement for target properties.

A Planning Advisory Board Member stated that the bill incentivizes sprawl while sacrificing recreation and open space with no guarantee that the MPDUs would be created. It also pointed to the limited number of stakeholders consulted during the writing of the bill [3]. In a [webinar](#) reviewing the Bill a CE staff member stated that the stakeholder group comprised four representatives of developers and no other private citizens. Neither members of the SACs for the various Region plans nor of the CAC for Plan2040 were included.

Scenic Rivers Land Trust spoke to the need for amendments, pointing out that density increases encouraged development in green space and increased the cost of land, making it more difficult to preserve. Development needs to be focused into appropriate areas [4].

Multiple GAN members requested that the bill be held and spoke about the very limited number of MPDUs that would be created in exchange for large changes in density, open space and impervious surface even in lots with no MPDUs [5].

In addition, there were 140 submissions of opposing written testimony, and 500+ emails to Councilmembers from GAN members and friends. But this barrage of opposition was not enough to even warrant a hold of the bill or introduction of any kind of amendment.

On multiple occasions, Councilwoman Picard spoke at length about the amount of time that she and Councilmembers Hummer and Rodvien had spent on the bill. She also stated that she was unwilling to “gut” the bill, apparently meaning amend it [\[6\]](#) .

It seemed clear to many observers that the Councilmembers arrived at the meeting certain about how they would vote on the Bill, and no amount of citizen objection would dissuade them. To many participants the deck seemed stacked on Bill 72-24. Perceptions like this discourage citizen participation in County government.

Passage of an affordable housing bill reflects the good intentions of the Council, and we applaud that. But, the bill is badly in need of amendment and we hope the County Executive will rapidly set up a workgroup to consider changes in the bill. We also hope this workgroup will be more inclusive of a broader range of stakeholders.

GAN members are encouraged to contact their Council representative and express their opinions on exclusion of citizen input in the writing and hearing of Bill 72-24 and suggest changes needed in the Bill.

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