

GAN requests to the County Council



Dear Anne Arundel County Council,

Here are some constituent requests from your friends and members of the Growth Action Network (GAN) that will serve not just a few, but all members of our community.

- Our first and sustaining request as always is that you demand that the county do a better job of investing in infrastructure before permitting additional development, especially in the most congested areas of the county. Insist that the county must include requirements for additional roads, transit, police, fire, parks and libraries before signing off on recently submitted applications for 12,000 additional units.
- The Transportation Adequate Public Facilities bill will be introduced this fall. It expands the focus from cars to transit, bikes and pedestrians in determining the overall impact of development. It needs a few amendments, but we ask you to pass it.
- Later this fall (in a study that began in 2019) the county will finally introduce a bill to establish fees that developers must pay to ameliorate the impact of their projects. We hope you scrutinize it carefully and demand that these projects fully fund their impact on our communities. For decades now, the county has subsidized developers by undercharging these impact fees. The result: The burden of those impacts gets folded into the county budget and has been passed along to all taxpayers for all of these years. It is long past time to make sure that development pays for the infrastructure needed to support it, so it is no longer a cost to all of us.
- You are currently considering a second bill that undermines the county's public campaign finance system. Don't pass it. In the name of false frugality, you've already reduced the funds available, likely allowing only one candidate to participate, in a year in which there are four open council seats and three additional candidates for county executive, all potentially eligible for public campaign financing.
- GAN is expanding our ongoing campaign to bring more openness and transparency to government. Our system needs more transparency and more citizen involvement in matters that have such a huge impact on life here. Of the 24 jurisdictions in Maryland, all but two have some form of planning commission which invites citizen input and comment in open and public forums and makes recommendations to the council. We wonder why Anne Arundel doesn't.

The current process allows developers and other special interests to petition the council privately and influence legislation to their benefit.

As a result, this council has passed several huge and hugely impactful bills that affect how and where housing and other development can occur in the county without a full understanding of the positive and negative impacts these code changes might have on the citizens and the environment in which we live. Some have had significant citizen input, but even in those cases, most of it has been in two-minute sound bites at council meetings.

These large bills are complex, written in legislative language, and hard for council members and citizens to fully understand. A planning commission would consider public input on these types of bills and provide input to the council on the positive and negative impacts such bills might have. GAN calls upon the council to invite more citizen engagement and allow more sunshine in government. Put the creation of a planning commission to the voters via charter amendment in the 2026 election.

- Finally, we repeat our complaint that too few county meetings allow for online participation. The administration is attempting to improve on that. We ask again: When will the council agree to allow remote participation at its meetings, just as many other jurisdictions in the state already do, as well as the legislature? Many of our residents live over an hour away from Annapolis, work shifts, have young children at home or are elderly or without transportation to get to the council meetings. For them, arriving in time for a 7 p.m. meeting every other Monday for a chance at two minutes of testimony is impossible. Hybrid meetings worked fine during COVID-19. Do the right thing, enable hybrid meeting participation and bring Anne Arundel into the 21st century with a more open and inclusive approach to government.
- We recognize that we are approaching an election year. Two of the seven council members are running for higher office. Two more are not running for reelection next year. With at least four open seats, 2025-26 could be a historic year for the council. Without having to worry about protecting their incumbency, this could also be a historic year for the council to act in the interest of all citizens, not just those privileged with access to council members and the time and money to petition their government.

*This article by Matt Minahan was recently **published as an op ed** in the Capital Gazette.*

Appeal of Chick-fil-A permits in Arnold

The Arnold Preservation Council (APC) is appealing development permits for a new Chick-fil-A outlet in Arnold. Residents are very concerned about traffic, environmental, and safety issues. A preliminary hearing was conducted on Sept. 2, and additional hearing sessions will be conducted on Sept. 11, 16, and 18. Turnout filled the small hearing room in the first session. The next session will be held in Council chambers at 5pm at the Arundel Center. Strong public turnout is requested by APC and more information is available at the [APC website](#).

Next GAN Board meeting August 27, All members are welcome to observe and comment. See calendar for link.

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