

Question 5:

Most Maryland counties have professionally staffed planning boards/commissions authorized to hold public hearings and issue advisory guidance to the County Council concerning land-use projects and policies to decision-making authorities. Will you support tasking the Planning Advisory Board with that mandate?

Question 5 responses

The following four candidates, listed alphabetically, are running in the Democratic primary:

James Kitchin

I commit to establishing a professionally-staffed planning commission that will be charged with holding public hearings and issuing advisory guidance to the County Council, the Administration, and other decision making authorities on land use policies. I believe this level of transparency will help ensure that the way we grow works for our residents and our communities. However, while I'm open to giving the Planning Advisory Board (PAB) this mandate - I'd also like to explore if this should be a separate, stand-alone commission. The PAB is already tasked with quite a lot, and I would want to make sure that the residents issuing this kind of advisory guidance have the time and capacity to do it well

Kyle Nembhard

Absolutely. Such a body would assist with giving residents and equal seat at the table. This is something that doesn't currently exist in the County

Allison Pickard

Community perspectives are important, and residents should have opportunities to provide thoughtful feedback on policies that shape growth, development, infrastructure, housing, and environmental outcomes in Anne Arundel County. Anne Arundel County has a particularly complex land-use framework involving zoning, critical area regulations, environmental requirements, adequate public facilities, infrastructure constraints, housing policy, and implementation of Plan 2040. Reviewing and evaluating land-use legislation before it reaches the County Council often requires significant technical and policy expertise. I believe the County's priority should be strengthening the professional planning and policy capacity within our land-use departments. Unlike some neighboring jurisdictions with fully professionalized planning commissions, Anne Arundel County's Planning Advisory Board is volunteer-based. Adding broad legislative review responsibilities

to a volunteer body could create challenges in consistency, technical analysis, and timely review of increasingly complex legislation. The County should continue investing in sophisticated planning expertise, data analysis, housing policy, environmental planning, and infrastructure coordination so land-use decisions are grounded in sound professional evaluation and aligned with the goals of Plan 2040

Pete Smith

Yes. I believe that a professionally staffed planning board and related commissions will make the development process better, and I support sensible solutions that increase our expertise while expanding opportunities for transparency and community involvement. We need resources to be able to professionalize all levels of planning and zoning decision making functions, and it is important that the county budget grow through job-creation and business development activities to provide those resources.

Dave Crawford -- Running unopposed in the Republican Primary

Yes — fully and enthusiastically. I support a strong, professionally staffed Planning Advisory Board (PAB) empowered to conduct public hearings and issue formal, non-binding advisory recommendations to the County Council on all significant land-use legislation and major projects. This reform is long overdue and consistent with best practices throughout Maryland.

GAN has advocated for a charter amendment to repair the current oversight gap — I agree that a charter fix is the right vehicle to give the PAB durable, independent authority. Under my administration, the PAB will be staffed with qualified professionals, operate on staggered terms to prevent radical shifts in composition, and hold hearings accessible to all residents — including hybrid formats so that working families and those without transportation can participate. Citizen input before legislation reaches the Council is not a bureaucratic hurdle; it is democratic governance working as it should.