



The voters want a Planning Commission

LET THE VOTERS DECIDE

Strong bipartisan public support

In two recent news reports, we learned that there is very strong bipartisan public support for establishing an independent, effective Planning Commission, which GAN has been advocating for several months.

In its October 24 edition the Capital Gazette highlighted the [results of a recent survey](#) by Prof. Dan Nataf at the Center for the Study of Local Issues at Anne Arundel Community College: "Respondents were asked whether they liked the idea of creating a "Planning Commission" that would review land-use legislation after hearing citizen and expert testimony; the question stems from an effort by the Growth Action Network — an Anne Arundel County environmental preservation group — to create a planning commission to gain citizen input and make recommendations to the County Council on land use issues".

"Respondents were given a five-point scale from "definitely yes" to "definitely no." Sixty-five percent of respondents favored the idea either "definitely" or "probably."

"The concept received bipartisan support, with 73% of Democrats and 57% of Republicans supporting the commission."

"There was more or less unanimity on that," Nataf said. "It was one area where there was consensus."

[An article in Eye on Annapolis](#) said something similar.

"More or less unanimity" means "Let the Voters Decide." That has been our mantra to the County Council, which should vote to put a charter amendment on the 2026 ballot. They have not been eager. Most have been resistant, saying they don't like the idea or a Planning Commission isn't needed. They feel they are doing this work just fine.

The Growth Action Network believes otherwise. A Planning Commission would be just advisory -- it would have no decision making authority. BUT, it would review all land use legislation -- there were 44 text amendments to the code in 2021-2024, most of which passed the Council quickly and with inadequate scrutiny. A Planning Commission would review those bills, consult experts, and hold open public meetings before making an advisory recommendation to the Council. This would shine more sunlight on what has been a closely-held, secretive process on complex matters where major land use legislation pops up on a Council agenda that citizens have a hard time to understand and penetrate, let alone influence in the 95 day life of the bill.

GAN testified on this matter again at Monday's County Council meeting:
<https://youtu.be/EjcVacQnbiw?t=6310>

Watch for an Action Alert soon, so you can add your voice to the "near unanimity."

We say again to the County Council, let the sunshine in. Put this question on the ballot in November, and Let the Voters Decide.

*Next GAN Board meeting December 10. All members are welcome to observe and comment.
See calendar for link.*

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