

SMAR criticizes majority of commissioners for vote

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To the Editor:

After an eight month long battle on behalf of Charles County property owners and businesses, last week the Charles County Commissioners voted to approve the proposed watershed conservation district, an act which will downzone 9,500 homes and 36,000 acres. Commissioner Stewart made the motion which was seconded by President Murphy, and the final vote was 3-2 with Commissioner Robinson rounding it out. Throughout the process, both Commissioners Davis and Rucci have spoken out strongly against the proposal and chose to recognize the outpouring of residents and community groups in opposition, up to the very last moment.

The Southern Maryland Association of Realtors has been involved in the process since the first hearing in November, testifying against the proposals- in fact, at the first hearing, it was SMAR leadership who requested the Planning Commission to notify the affected property owners. In addition, we have requested an independent financial impact study at every subsequent hearing and public record submission. Since the first hearing, we have created a web site, garnering hundreds of letters in opposition to the proposal from local residents which were directly sent to the Commissioners. Our social media pages were flooded with residents who learned about the proposal from us, and despite only having a following of about 1,500 people, we have had well over 30,000 attend to our WCD posts and share. The data alone will serve us well in 2018 as we elect those who put its residents first.

A message to all Charles County property owners- we will not give up and you should not either. We are identifying all actions of recourse at every level to rectify this situation for the directly affected owners to all property owners in Charles who will be forced to pay for the increased costs (take a look at your future public water and sewer rates for example). To the business community, we are working with your leaders and for you.

Many of our small business owner members, family owned businesses who have been in Charles for generations, have joined the battle. No proposal in Charles has brought more groups together than the watershed conservation district- we are proud to be an integral part of this community because we too, live and work here. We too, are raising our families here.

Lastly, to Commissioners Debra Davis and Bobby Rucci- we salute you.

Southern Maryland Association of Realtors

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