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Growth Task Force – 2003

Frank Johnson, Assistant to Commissioner Gouge, contributed to this article.

Meeting Change for January:

Neil Ridgely, County Zoning Administrator, will give a presentation on the status of the Residential Development Deferral.

The meeting will be at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, January 15, 2004, at the Freedom Christian Church in Carrolltown Center. The preceding Board meeting begins at 6:30 pm, and is open to the public .

- Be sure to renew your FACC membership for 2004 – form enclosed

In 2003, the Growth Task Force's (GTF) was formed to bring the broad-based community together – realtors, builders, citizens, town representatives, community representatives (for example, from FACC, FPAC and local PTAs), the Board of Education – to consider Carroll County's adequate facilities provisions. The goal was to recommend a process, including adequate facilities standards, which would not allow growth to occur more quickly than our ability as a County to put facilities in place and to ensure facilities are planned where they're needed.

Many thought this simply wasn't possible because of the task force's large size, different viewpoints, difficult issues, and detailed discussions. Task Force members were, however, up to the challenge, and with staff assistance have made specific recommendations on all of the key issues.

The first overall issue was the database. The Task Force very quickly recommended hiring staff, as necessary, to begin the process of accounting for past development and predicting future development. The Task Force also advocated for an accounting process, a "growth model," that would for the first

time account for the actual cumulative effects of growth (rather than review each subdivision in isolation, without consideration of past approvals).

Second, the group reviewed the adequate facilities process. First tackled was the process of accounting for agricultural development without breaking promises to farmers. A process was developed that would account for all development in approving new subdivisions. Under Concurrency Management, staff certified the adequacy of facilities before the Planning and Zoning Commission ever saw the plans. Presently, the Planning and Zoning Commission has no role to play in determining adequate facilities. The Task Force decided that this needed to change, and that the Planning and Zoning Commission should be involved in making a determination as to whether facilities are adequate, in an open and public meeting.

In addition, the Task Force, with strong staff support, decided that the subdivision approval process needed to change to allow the Department of Planning and Zoning the ability to review plans twice (rather than only once, as they do under Concurrency). As to

facilities, the Planning and Zoning Commission would determine adequacy on the first review, then review that decision at the second (final) review stage.

Finally, the Department of Planning and Zoning reviewed the adequate facilities standards themselves. Three separate subcommittees of the Task Force met for several months and completed their recommendations this past fall. The Task Force as a whole reviewed the subcommittee reports and made final recommendations for schools, fire and rescue, police, roads, parks and water/sewer at the December meeting. In each case, the recommendations were not of one extreme or another, but attempted to take account of costs, the county's fiscal situation, and realities. At the same time there was broad acknowledgment that standards needed to be reviewed and in some cases upgraded to better reflect the needs of Carroll County today.

Some of the GTF's recommendations include:

- Adopting the Board of Education's adequacy standards for schools. These standards are more stringent than the 120% under

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P.O. Box 142
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EDITOR:
Nicole Musgrave-Burdette

PRODUCTION:
Mike Naused
Deborah Dugan

E-MAIL:
editor@freedomareacitizens.org

Visit our Website
www.freedomareacitizens.org


Continued from Page 1
Concurrency.

- Upgrading police protection from the current 1 for 1,000 to 1.5 for 1,000, under a graduated program. Currently there are 1.2 officers per 1,000 people in Carroll County.
- Putting in clear standards for both County and, for the first time, State roads, along with an explicit provision allowing the County to require developers to pay for improvements.
- Setting a specific standard that

would more meaningfully test the fire and rescue services ability to provide emergency assistance.

Not every vote has been unanimous but each recommendation was only made after substantial discussion, and generally reflects the consensus of the group. The staff has been hard at work on the task, and at the January meeting, the GTF will, review the overall


adequate facilities provisions and hopefully make a final recommendation to the Commissioners. The original intent was to attempt to wrap up work by March 2004. If final recommendations are made at the January meeting, the GTF will be two months ahead of schedule.

For additional information about the Growth Task Force, visit <http://ccgov.carr.org/pland/growth/index.html> 

HELP WANTED

If you have an idea for an Informer article or would like to write one, contact our editor at editor@freedomareacitizens.org ■ Home Owner's Associations are encouraged to share their issues.

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MEETING THIS THURSDAY,
1/15/04... Details inside**