



# THE FREEDOM

FREEDOM AREA CITIZENS' COUNCIL

# INFORMER

A Publication of FACC / Freedom Area Citizens' Council

January 2002

## Tax increases coming

The county government has projected a \$90 million shortfall between revenue and costs over the next six years. The combination of unchecked growth and tight budgets—and unwise decisions, particularly in the last six years—has made an increase in property tax rates inevitable.

Of course there is another alternative though admittedly it will not correct the ills of the past; that is, the government could decrease projected spending. For example, the government could connect already drilled wells in the Sykesville area to the Freedom water system rather than spending upwards of \$14 million for a water treatment plant at Piney Run Lake. Or they could have not built an unneeded elementary school and an unneeded high school in Westminster. That money would have been better spent for new schools in Mt. Airy and South Carroll where they are needed. Or they could have NOT paid six times the assessed value of property in Union Bridge to help private corporations. In fact, they didn't need to spend a dime in that case.

The real estate tax rate in Carroll County is already the fifth highest (\$1.048 per hundred) in Maryland after Baltimore City (2.328), Baltimore Co. (1.115), Harford Co. (1.092), and Wicomico Co. (1.070). See [www.dat.state.md.us/sdatweb/taxrates](http://www.dat.state.md.us/sdatweb/taxrates) on the web for a comparison.

As a friend and potential candidate for county commissioner said to me a couple of weeks ago, "if you win, you lose," meaning that whoever gets elected as commissioner in this year's elections, Republican or Democrat, is going to have to raise taxes.

So, a tax increase is coming. There is no other sufficient alternative. Increasing the industrial tax base is not working. And the fallacy that the county can be supported by new residential development is idiocy. All that does is saddle future taxpayers with more debt for new schools and roads.

If there had been some discipline by past (and present) commissioners, if there had been some semblance of managed growth, the county wouldn't be in this predicament. But there wasn't and now a tax increase is on the way. ■

## Commissioner Gouge guest at next FACC meeting

Commissioner Julia W. Gouge will be the principal speaker at the January 2002 general membership meeting of the Freedom Area Citizens' Council.

The meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m., Tuesday January 15, 2002 at the Christian Church in Carrolltowne Center.

Mrs. Gouge will address the Zoning Ordinance Review Committee (ZORC) amendment to the county zoning laws, the Piney Run water treatment plant, Bumpers Drive-In and other topics of interest to citizens of the Freedom Area, and she will stand for questions.

Please attend this meeting and bring a friend or a new member. Also, bring your checkbook and take this opportunity to renew your membership for 2002. A bargain at \$10 per year per family. ■

**Next FACC meeting  
January 15th, 2002  
Carrolltowne Center**

## Upcoming meetings of interest to the Freedom Area

**Jan. 16: 10:45 a.m.**  
**Planning & Zoning Comm.**  
P-94-022, Nell's Acres  
Request to delete planned major street from site plan.  
Owner: Howard Patton  
Developer: Howard Patton

**Jan. 28: (Time TBD)**  
**Subdivision Advisory Cmte**  
Proposed subdivision on conservation land at MD Route 197 and Buckhorn Rd.  
Owner: George Miller  
Developer: Mueller Homes

**Jan. 30: 2:00 p.m.**  
**Board of Zoning Appeals**  
Case # 4651, Nell's Acres.  
Conditional use for a 71-bed assisted living facility.  
Owner: Howard Patton  
Developer: ABAR Homes

## State incorporation law needs change

*In June of last year the Baltimore Sun's Carroll County section carried an article headlined "Effort to be town fails," talking about the "fledgling" effort to incorporate Eldersburg. The reporter was referring to a six-month effort by a small group of citizens disgusted with the Carroll County government's Cinderella treatment of the Freedom area. She commented that this is not the end, that there are a lot of people who believe incorporation is the way to go.*

*I hope she's right, because the reasons for the effort remain valid—no control of planning or zoning by local citizens and a well-documented inequitable provision of services by the county to the Freedom area.*

*That's why our schools and roads are overcrowded and why there have been water usage restrictions for three years of the last four years.*

*And that's why we have a proposal to build a drive-in theater on land zoned for industrial development.*

*The reasons given for abandoning the attempt at incorporation were the lack of money and volunteers. What I want to address here is the first of these—money.*

*The reason that incorporation has such a small chance of success is that the State law is heavily biased against success. There are at least three points in the process where the county government can just say no.*

*The biggest technical obstacle is that the law requires a very expensive land survey of the proposed area of incorporation to accompany the petition for referendum. Ostensibly, this is so that the voters will know if they can vote on the issue or not.*

*But it isn't necessary to define that area in terms of surveyed "courses and distances." Voters can deter-*

*mine whether they can vote on the basis of a map and a description including terms such as "west of the Baltimore County line," "south of Little Morgan Run," or "east of Linton Road," etc. That's how the voters would make their determination anyway.*

*There is a solution to this problem. Change the law. Change it in a way that returns the decision to the voters—taking it out of the hands of land surveyors.*

*The change required would be to permit a referendum on the basis of a description of the proposed area like the example above. Then, if the referendum passes, to extend the time between the referendum and completion of the process (about a year now) to two years to permit the proponents time to find funding for the survey.*

*A land survey would still be required before the charter of the new town (including its boundaries) is registered with the State Department of Legislative Services. But fund raising would be easier because citizens would have given their approval and funding (in the form of contributions, grants or seed money from the State) would be easier to find.*

*I can still remember comments by an opponent of incorporation. He was skeptical because of the probable increase in taxes if Eldersburg were incorporated. I repeated to him all of the arguments about the county's control of zoning because the Freedom Area is unincorporated.*

*Now, a year later, this gentleman is embroiled in opposition to the Bumpers Drive-In which is proposed to be built on land adjacent to his neighborhood. It's really tough NOT to say I told you so. ■*

Phil Bennett  
Eldersburg

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### Notices:

- (1) The third session of the Board of Zoning Appeals meeting related to the proposed **Bumpers Drive-In** on Liberty Road previously scheduled for January 8, 2002 has been delayed to Wednesday January 23, 2002 at 9:30 a.m. Please attend to express your concerns, if any, about the proposed drive-in.
- (2) The FACC web site will soon be on-line at [FreedomAreaCitizens.org](http://FreedomAreaCitizens.org). Some of you will have received this edition of *The Informer* via e-mail. If you didn't and would like to do so, send us a note at philbenn@qis.net. In any case, if you have e-mail (almost half of you do) please confirm your address so we can keep our records up to date. When the web site comes on-line, you will be able to read *The Informer* on-line. Some will continue to receive the newsletter both by e-mail and U.S. mail so that we can meet the USPS bulk mail requirement.

## County efforts on WTP moving right along

Despite being told twice, in writing, that the state will not approve the proposed water treatment plant at Piney Run Lake, the county's efforts to build the plant continue.

In the first week of January 2002, the county received revised plans for the plant from Black and Veatch, a Gaithersburg engineering firm. The foot-thick package of plans will be forwarded to the Maryland Department of the Environment for approval and to obtain a construction permit for the project.

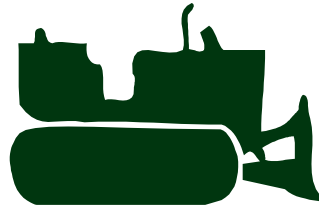
However, representatives of the MDE have said that they will not look at the plans. MDE engineers

refused to meet with the county and the contractor, as is normal on a project of this type, while earlier plans scrapped about five years ago were being revised. B&V had been retained by the county on an approximately half million contract to revise the plans and, according to Commissioner Donald Dell, to obtain a construction permit for the plant.

Another part of the B&V contract is paving of an access road to the construction site and laying a large water main along the road. Widening of Hollenberry Road also began in the first week of January 2002. Neighbors complained of coming home

late in the week to find bulldozers and other construction equipment hard at work.

The county was told by the MDE, twice in July 2001, that MDE would not issue a construction permit for the plant because it is "not in compliance with Carroll's water and sewer master plan." The county has subsequently revised the water and sewer master plan, but it isn't clear whether the state will consider the revisions. The revisions have been reviewed and approved by the Carroll County Planning and Zoning Commission. ■



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*Commentary:*

## Foolishness in government

*Many years ago an old philosopher friend of mine told me "Only a fool will not change his mind even when proven wrong."*

*Would his philosophy include the two county commissioners that will not change their mind about the new zoning ordinance, the ZORC amendment?*

*It seems that everyone in the county is against the law except a few landowners that will benefit from it, and a few die-hard Republicans who would vote for a right-leaning dog if it survived the primary.*

*During the Korean War I had to spend several weeks in an anti brain-washing school and I can tell you that a few of the people on the ZORC could have written the book because they have done a complete job on commissioners Dell and Frazier.*

*Some people thought that the county's new character development program would make them change their minds. But then they have not changed their minds about all of the rash decisions they have made in the last three years so I don't think the will on this area.*

*Maybe we will get lucky and their New Year's resolution will be to disband the so-called ZORC completely. Not likely*

*The commissioners on the present board are in the final year of their term with a lot of issues unresolved, and most of the county voters are very unhappy with the way two of them have managed the government. If these two have any idea of running for reelection—and they both have said they will—they had better take a good look at the "walls," because the handwriting has been there for some time.*

*I feel sorry for the next board of commissioners whether it is the incumbents or others because of the financial state the county. They (the next set of commissioners) will never make it through their term without raising taxes or cutting services to the bone.*

*Whatever happened to our government of the people, by the people and for the people? This has been changed in Carroll County to a government of the few, by the few, and for the few. Most of the big decisions in the county have leaned that way the last three years.*

*"Better keep yourself clean and bright. You are in the window—through which you must see the world."*  
George Barnard Shaw ■

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## TIME TO RENEW YOUR FACC MEMBERSHIP

**RENEW NOW FOR 2002!**

*FACC is a non-profit community organization.*

### FREEDOM AREA CITIZENS' COUNCIL FACC MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of a Homeowners' Association? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, which HOA? \_\_\_\_\_

*I would be interested in offering assistance with:*

Legal Affairs  Membership  Schools  Publication  
 Government  Media Relations  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Annual Membership Fee: \$10.00 per household**  
Please make checks payable to FACC. Mail to: FACC, P.O. Box 142, Sykesville, MD 21784