



ANACOSTIA WATERSHED SOCIETY

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Prince George's County Stormwater Bill Under Fire from Developers

Bladensburg, Md., July 18, 2011... Tomorrow, Tuesday, July 19, 2011, Prince George's County faces a historic choice regarding the future of development in the county. At stake is clean, green, attractive development versus more of the same from a backward looking development community that is all together too powerful. Citizens consistently ask for more attractive, higher quality development in the county, while the development community continually opposes any measures aimed at such improvements. Will the Prince George's County Council set a new vision for the county's development or will the developers win the day again?

The clean water bill, CB-15-2011, sets stormwater management standards for future development in Prince George's County. The development community says they can't afford to meet higher standards, but the truth is **citizens can't afford the bills for wet basements, flooded roads, eroded streams and damaged infrastructure** that result from inadequate management of stormwater runoff. Forest Heights Mayor Jacqueline Goodall often speaks of town residents who can't use their basements because of persistent water, and this past winter many residents of North Brentwood lost heat because stormwater runoff caused land subsidence that damaged their natural gas lines. Why should citizens pick up the tab for costs passed on from developers who don't adequately manage stormwater runoff from their projects?

Scientific studies show that at least 1" of stormwater runoff must be managed to protect water quality and there is an emerging regional consensus around this standard: DC, Montgomery County, Tysons Corner, and Philadelphia are all at or above a 1" redevelopment stormwater standard. Yet CB-15 requires management of only the state minimum 0.5" until 2016, when the standard rises to 0.75".

Prince George's County won't reach the needed 1" of treatment until 2019 - why wait 8 years to implement a standard that is needed right now? This delay is especially troubling because under President Obama's Chesapeake Bay plan, the requirements of the county's Clean Water Act permit are going to be significantly tightened. One of the new requirements will be retrofitting significant acreage of existing impervious surface (roads, parking lots, etc.) to a 1" stormwater management standard. This means **every**

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project built under CB-15 for the next 8 years will have to be retrofitted at taxpayer expense. In times of tight budgets it is appalling that the County Executive and County Council are proposing to pass these costs on to the future.

Sadly, even the modest provisions of CB-15 are too much for the development community, which is pressing hard for weakening amendments. While they work the county council, developers are also reaching out to communities and telling them that strong stormwater standards will prevent economic development from coming to their communities. This fear mongering is the worst sort of cynicism - developers have ignored our established communities for decades while building luxury projects outside the Beltway.

Meanwhile, Prince George's DPWT has been walking around a "case study" to help county council members understand the costs of stormwater under various regulatory scenarios. Only later did it become clear that this study was prepared not by DPWT, but by Michael Novy of Ben Dyer Associates - an engineering firm closely tied to the Prince George's County development community. While DPWT staff testified to the honesty of the study and its conclusions about the efficacy of strong stormwater management requirements, Mr. Novy testified before the council's THE committee **against** such requirements. How can the same person be both an honest broker of information about stormwater management implementation and also an expert witness against the feasibility of such technologies? The sad thing is, a close analysis of the "study's" conclusions show that **under a range of possible stormwater standards, the cost of compliance remained less than 1% of project costs.** That's right, developers think so little of quality of life in Prince George's County that they are not willing to spend less than 1% more to add green amenities to the projects they build. Why does the county let these people hold them hostage?

Prince Georgians want attractive, high quality development and the best projects include green infrastructure measures like green roofs, shade trees, permeable pavement and open green spaces that are project amenities which provide space to walk, sit, and be with family and friends. These types of projects are being built right next door in DC and Montgomery County, but won't be built in Prince George's County because CB-15 doesn't require enough of developers. Over the next few years these differences in the quality and look of development projects will become obvious. CB-15 is a missed opportunity for the Baker Administration and the County Council, made all the more disappointing because of the county's current focus on transit and redevelopment projects. Prince George's County is missing a chance to revitalize its established communities and make them greener, cleaner, more attractive and more livable.

About the Anacostia Watershed Society

The Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) is dedicated to cleaning the water, recovering the shoreline, and honoring the heritage of the Anacostia River and its watershed communities in Washington, DC and Maryland. Since 1989, AWS has worked to conserve and protect the land and water of the Anacostia River and its watershed communities through educational programs, stewardship efforts, and advocacy projects. AWS works to make the Anacostia River and its tributaries swimmable and fishable as required by the Clean Water Act. For more information about AWS, visit www.anacostiaws.org.