

Minutes: Housing / Community Development Subcommittee

May 21, 2018

C. Vernon Gray Conference Room

George Howard Building – Ellicott City, MD

The meeting began at 3:08 p.m.

In attendance: Anne Brinker, Paul Casey, Kiim Flowers, Cindy Parr, Bruce Rothschild, and Coleen West. Also attending, Jeff Meyers, Council staff.

Jason Jannati, Chief Development Officer, Power52¹, briefed the subcommittee about a variety of issues related to housing, development, infrastructure, and innovation. His passion is to help create communities that contribute to their own food and power supplies and provide job training and employment. He shared his experiences in addressing some of these issues with current projects like Nixon's Farm solar project, and some other proposed solar projects.

Recent changes in how solar farms are assessed resulted in increased taxes, however, tying a solar farm to a particular community may provide tax benefits. Additionally, some projects might be eligible for PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) approaches. If the community contains multifamily buildings, metering can be an issue. Solar farms are not always considered the most desirable use of agricultural land and may be restricted on land that is subject to an agricultural easement.

Community food production may take place on community garden plots or using hydroponic methods in warehouse-type structures. The subcommittee discussed some existing community garden projects and the relationship of those projects with the Food Bank. Ms. Brinker described the relationships among national, state, and local food banks and pantries and some of the issues and complications that have arisen.

Mr. Jannati is concerned that the permitting process for some innovative projects is cumbersome and takes too long. Additionally, as the subcommittee discussed previously, some agencies with particular kinds of expertise may not be part of the project review process. The County does not seem to have any office or method designated to receive innovative ideas or proposals. The subcommittee is considering proposing a recommendation on this issue.

The subcommittee discussed some recurring themes that may generate recommendations. Some recommendations may be very broad, for example, there is insufficient information sharing; others may be very specific, for example, including the Department of Aging in certain DPZ plan reviews.

The subcommittee review agenda topics and presenters for the next several meetings:

- June 4 – John Byrd, Director, Department of Recreation and Parks

¹ <http://www.power52.org/>

- June 26 – another discussion with Kelly Cimino and Peter Engel
- July 16 – discussion of recommendations and policies
- July 23 – continuation of July 16 discussion

The meeting ended at 5:17 p.m.

