

Walker-Bey, James T.

From: Janet Gingold <janet.gingold@mdsierra.org>
Sent: Friday, February 16, 2024 11:52 AM
To: Clerk of the Council
Subject: DSP-21001 Suffrage Point - request to speak and testimony
Attachments: Prince George's County Sierra Club - Suffrage Point DSP 21001.pdf

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As a person of record regarding DSP-21002 Remand Suffrage Point, I would like to request to speak at the hearing scheduled for February 26.

Attached is written testimony on behalf of the Prince George's Sierra Club.

Thank you.

Janet Gingold
Executive Committee
Prince George's Sierra Club
13107 Whiteholm Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774
301-814-1223



February 15, 2024

To: District Council

Re: DSP 21001 Remand Suffrage Point, Werrlein WSSC, LLC, Applicant

The Prince George's County Sierra Club opposes the Suffrage Point development, and we object to the Planning Board's November 30 approval of Detailed Site Plan 21001 (DSP 21001).

As a county-wide, grass-roots environmental advocacy organization, the Prince George's Sierra Club has an interest in land-use decisions and county policies that affect climate resilience and the long-term health and well-being of county residents. We support and encourage infill development in our inner-ring suburbs and near transit lines. As our population grows, we need more housing; increasing population density in our already-developed areas should remain a priority. However, new housing should not be built in a floodplain, especially as current weather patterns support projections for more torrential rainfall and flooding in the future. Developing in flood plains leads to financial harm to the people who will purchase these properties and their neighbors downstream since it lowers property values, raises insurance costs, and leads to more downstream flooding as impervious surfaces replace vegetation. Moreover, mold and other water-borne allergens, pathogens, and pollutants can adversely affect the health of residents of buildings in the flood-prone areas, contributing to health disparities.

We are deeply concerned that the detailed site plan 21001 for the Suffrage Point Development Werrlein's plans and floodplain maps, and the County's reviews, do not adequately take climate change and flood risk into account. Even current FEMA maps show that almost all of this property is in the AE, or special flood hazard zone, and this doesn't even consider changes in precipitation and increased flooding in the region due to climate change (see map). According to FEMA, properties in the special flood hazard zone have "at least a 1 in 4 chance of flooding during a 30-year mortgage."



New homeowners count on the County's permitting process to protect them from known risks. They should be able to trust that when the County approves a site plan, they don't need to worry that their brand new residence might be just one storm away from catastrophe.

The Planning Board and the District Council cannot undo problems related to past decisions about development in floodplains, but every decision going forward should take into account the risks of more extreme precipitation events and flooding. Ignoring the dangers can lead to long-term harm for those who invest in these properties – including potential property loss, loss of wealth, and adverse health outcomes.

In the development of the Prince George's County Climate Action Plan, the Climate Action Commission specifically addressed flood risks as a major climate vulnerability for our county and recommended prohibiting new development in flood plains, stating, "the County's land use and zoning regulations should be updated to ensure that development is not occurring in floodplains and that new buildings are prepared to withstand anticipated climate risk." (page 96). We refer decision-makers to priority recommendation A2, pages 196-199, for more details about recommendations for deterring development in floodplains and equity considerations, including buyouts to help current residents of flood-prone properties to relocate.

We count on the District Council to exercise its authority and its wisdom to protect future Prince George's County residents from financial and personal danger related to building new housing in inappropriate areas like special flood hazard zones. In the long-term interest of residents and investors, we urge the District Council to reject DSP 21001.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janet Gingold', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Janet Gingold, (Person of Record)
Chair Emeritus
Prince George's County Sierra Club
13107 Whiteholm Drive
Upper Marlboro, MD 20774

Joseph Jakuta, Vice-Chair
Prince George's County Sierra Club