



Calvin S. Hawkins, II
Chair
At-Large Council Member

April 6, 2021

Honorable Joanne C. Benson, Chair
Prince George's County Senate Delegation
James Senate Office Building – Room 214
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Honorable Erek L. Barron, Chair
Prince George's County House Delegation
Lowe House Office Building – Room 207E
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Re: **HB 980 (PG-416-21) – PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY –
PUBLIC ETHICS – COUNTYWIDE ZONING MAP AMENDMENTS**

Dear Senator Benson and Delegate Barron:

I write on behalf of the Prince George's County Council to thank you for your efforts to date on behalf of Prince George's County. I must also bring to your attention the importance to the Council, and to our County, of the final passage of HB 980 (PG-416-21) in the final week of the 2021 General Assembly session. We acknowledge the efforts of the respective Delegations as you have considered and advanced this bill to date.

As you know, on December 15, 2020, County Executive Alsobrooks and I, as Chair of the Council, sent the Prince George's County Senate and House Delegations our 2021 General Assembly Joint Priority letter for the upcoming General Assembly Session. Among the top priorities was advancing the County's New Zoning Ordinances and Countywide Map Amendment process to completion.

With the adoption of the County's General Plan (Plan 2035) in 2014, the County and Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) embarked on updating the County's fifty-year (50) old Zoning and Subdivision ordinances. After over four years of community, stakeholder and consultant input, the Prince George's County Council adopted new Ordinances in 2018 as part of the first phase. In 2019 the Council authorized M-NCPPC to prepare the second phase - a Countywide Map Amendment ("CMA") - to implement the zones in the new ordinances (see attached timeline for the Zoning Rewrite and CMA process to date). In 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and state emergency law, the twice scheduled CMA public hearings scheduled in March (in person) and November (virtual), were postponed to request this legislation.

HB 980 (PG-416-21), sponsored by the House Delegation Chair of behalf of the County Executive, County Council and M-NCPPC, seeks a clarifying amendment to the General Provisions Article to allow the CMA process to proceed to completion, as the new Ordinances cannot be used until the new zones are applied to properties throughout the County. Since the bill was contemplated and filed, the joint County team has endeavored to educate and inform members of the General Assembly about the Zoning Rewrite and CMA process and the impact of the current State Ethics law on completing this almost seven (7) year effort to modernize the County Zoning ordinance.

To date, the joint County Team has done the following:

- **November 13, 2020** – Attended the Joint Senate/House Delegation Meetings and described the need for possible legislation
- **December 2020** – Consulted with Maryland State Ethics Committee of possible avenues to complete the CMA, with ultimate recommendation to approach General Assembly for clarifying legislation
- **December 15, 2020** – County Council approves 2021 General Assembly Joint Priority Letter including need for CMA legislation
- **February 2, 2021** – Conducted meetings with Prince George’s County House Delegation County Affairs Subcommittee Leadership
- **February 2, 2021** – Testified before the Prince George’s County House Delegation Bill Hearing
- **February 11 & 12, 2021** – Conducted meetings with Prince George’s County House Delegation County Affairs Subcommittee Members
- **February 17, 2021** – Appeared before the Prince George’s County House Delegation County Affairs Subcommittee (Bill Reviewed - Held)
- **February 24, 2021** - Appeared before the Prince George’s County House Delegation County Affairs Subcommittee (Bill Favorable with Amendment adding Sunset – 5-0)
- **February 26, 2021** - Appeared before the full Prince George’s County House Delegation (Bill Favorable as Amended – 18-0)
- **March 16, 2021** - Appeared before the House Environment & Transportation Committee
- **March 18, 2021** - House Environment and Transportation Committee Vote (Bill Favorable with Amendment - 18-5)
- **March 17, 2021** - Conducted meetings with County Senate Delegation Leadership
- **March 20, 2021** – Full House Vote (Bill Favorable with Amendment - 97-32)
- **March 29, 2021** - Appeared before the Prince George’s County Senate Delegation County (Bill – Held)
- **April 1, 2021** – Appeared before the Senate Health, Education & Environmental Affairs Committee
- **April 1, 2021** - Prince George’s County Senate Delegation County (Bill – Held)
- **April 5, 2021** - Prince George’s County Senate Delegation County (Bill – Favorable as Amended – 8-0)
- **January – April 2021** – provided weekly updates to the County Council on status of the bill

This list does not include the numerous individual conversations and discussions held by Council Members and staff with members of the General Assembly, key stakeholders and the public during this process. As you can see from the extensive legislative and public outreach effort, there have been numerous opportunities for public and open discussion on this legislation. The County Council, despite repeated misrepresentations, unfounded allegations, outright fabrications and possible slander, has endeavored to provide accurate and reliable information to all, as required under both statute and case law. In addition, we have garnered the support of key County and regional stakeholders on the

legislation, including but not limited to the Prince George’s Chamber of Commerce, Prince George’s Business Roundtable, Prince George’s Association of Realtors, Prince George’s Municipal Association and the Coalition for Smarter Growth.

With less than a week before Sine Die, we again encourage both Delegations to move the bill to passage so that this County’s seven year, and several million dollars in taxpayer money does not go to waste. We have worked successfully with both the House and Senate Delegations on amendments to address legitimate concerns raised and believe the bill is stronger as a result of the legislative process. Final passage of the amended bill is necessary and too important to the future growth, development and success of the County that we all represent. We stand ready to continue our efforts to work with you to seek final approval.

Sincerely,



Hon. Calvin S. Hawkins, II
County Council Chair

Attachment

cc: Members, Prince George’s County Senate Delegation
Members, Prince George’s County House Delegation
Hon. Paul Pinsky, Chair, Senate Education Health & Environment Affairs Committee
Hon. Kumar Barve, Chair, House Environment & Transportation Committee
Council Members, Prince George’s County Council
Hon. Angela D. Alsobrooks, Prince George’s County Executive
Tara Jackson, Chief Administrative Officer, Office of the County Executive
Joy Russell, Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive
John Erzen, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the County Executive
Rhea Harris, State Legislative Affairs Director, Office of the County Executive
J. Kenneth Battle, Director, County Council General Assembly Committee