

January 13, 2004
Testimony Before the County Council Regarding Bill 37-03

Mr. President and Members of the Council:

My name is Mark R. Adelman; I reside at 3206 University Blvd. W., Kensington, MD 20895. I am here testifying as an individual but it is probably relevant that I am the Immediate Past President of the Kensington Heights Citizens Association, that I serve as Chair of the KHCA Education Committee as well as a KHCA delegate to the Montgomery County Civic Federation and the Allied Civic Group, and that I am active in the Wheaton Citizens Association and the Montgomery County Education Forum, as well as other groups.

I am here today because I made the mistake of reading the draft of this bill, was appalled by its implications for Montgomery County Growth Policy, and felt compelled to ask you to reject it and craft a new and truly adequate alternative piece of legislation.

In my initial read of the draft I became thoroughly confused because the bracket before #1 on line 18 appears to have no closing partner. I called a friend of mine and said "It appears that they are deleting EVERYTHING after "Simplified Description". His initial reply was that you might well be doing that. However, after reading carefully he said, "I have to assume that the closing bracket was supposed to be on line 30, after the word "ceilings". You just sort of have to figure such things out."

Chastened, I read on, much more carefully, making careful notes, trying to figure things out, and I'm pretty sure I've got it. Bill 37-03 is entitled "Growth Policy - Process". There IS NO detailed process, but that's OK, because there is NO detailed growth policy. Just a bunch of platitudes that amount to saying that a series of elected or appointed officials charged with monitoring and adjusting Growth Policy in our County, in the best interest of all its citizens, can take a pass. The main focus seems to be on the dates by which certain reports must be filed. But there is far too little detail about the CONTENT of the reports. There are no rules for collecting data and evaluating, by comparison to benchmarks, whether the data indicate that goals are being reached. No requirement that each successive agency or branch of government MUST evaluate the performance of the folks at the preceding step. Not even a requirement that anything be changed if something isn't going well - but then how would we know if something isn't going well if no data are collected, no benchmarks are assessed? So why bother requiring that anyone take any action? Of course if someone WANTS to take action, sure, they can make a recommendation...

Well none of us needs much data to conclude that our Growth Policy isn't working. Our Growth is out of control, racing ahead of the establishment of adequate public facilities, like schools, roads, sidewalks, etc. Some of us believe it needs to be improved and that that is still possible. Others think that things are moving along just fine. Bill 37-03 will sure please those who are already satisfied, but not the rest of us. You have an obligation to craft a Process bill that specifies a Process. Please DO that. And then many of us will thank you!

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