



Visions & Decisions

Volume 2 Issue 1 **SUMMER** 2009

The Washington County Planning Department's Quarterly E-Newsletter

New Development Review Process



On August 3, 2009 the Planning Department and the Department of Land Development Engineering began to process Land Development review and approval under newly created procedures.

The creation of a new process began with the County seeking input regarding the current processes for development review and permitting from the development community. As a result of the development communities recommendations, a Plans Approval Process Committee was created (PAPC). The PAPC was made up of County and State department employees who are responsible for Development Review.

The PAPC committee's goals were to improve plan review and permitting process efficiency and to provide technical oversight and enforcement of codes and regulations. The PAPC recommended that one authority be responsible for tracking projects, all plans review agencies use the county's Permits system "Velocity Hall" for tracking projects and publishing comments, and the creation of a comprehensive checklist for initial plan review and permit submittal screening.

Other highlights of changes include:

- one plan submission point
- concurrent agency review
- most agency fees paid upfront
- initial agency coordination meeting

More information on the [new procedures](#) can be obtained from the Planning Department website.

UGA Committee Recommendations

The Urban Growth Area Advisory Committee is nearing completion of its tasks assigned by the Washington County Commissioners. The committee is preparing its final report that includes recommendations on zoning text amendments and property assignments in the Urban Growth Area. Over the past year, the Committee has reviewed planning staff proposals for changes to the text of urban zones in the Zoning Ordinance and zoning districts assigned to properties in the Urban Growth Area. A formal presentation of the final report will be scheduled on the agenda of a regular County Commissioners meeting in the near future. Planning Commission review and recommendations on staff proposals will also follow. Property owners can expect to receive formal notice of proposed zoning changes and an opportunity to comment prior to public hearings and adoption. More information will be available on our website in the up-coming weeks.

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For newsletter questions/comments or to be added or removed from our email, please contact Misty Wagner-Grillo at mgrillo@washco-md.net



PROPOSED FOREST CONSERVATION ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENTS

The Planning Commission held a public meeting on August 3, 2009 to consider the application for changes to the County's Forest Conservation Ordinance. The changes were to bring the Ordinance into conformance with the new state laws that are effective October 1, 2009. The application contains 12 separate changes to the text of the Forest Conservation Ordinance. Most of the changes are to add or revise language regarding exemptions, and also add definitions and text to allow the option of street tree plantings in the Hagerstown Urban Growth Area. An increase in the Payment in Lieu amount is also required by new state law and can be revised by resolution of the Commissioners. A brief summary of the required changes for conformance of State law, are as follows:



- Amendment of the Exemption section (Article 3.2) to change the forest disturbance threshold for activity conducted on a single lot from 40,000 to 20,000 square feet. The "immediate family member" declaration of intent exemption is changed to a child of the owner and the forest disturbance threshold for exemption is changed from 40,000 to 20,000 square feet.
- As the new state law removed the exemption for development on existing paved surface in the State Ordinance, the County Ordinance at 3.2 Q is amended to be no less stringent.
- The new state law requires the Payment In Lieu amount to be a minimum of 30 cents per square foot until September 30, 2014 and after that date to be adjusted each year for inflation. The state law was also amended to allow use of forest conservation fund money for maintenance of existing forests and achieving urban canopy goals. The local PIL amount is proposed to be revised by resolution of the County Commissioners.
- In addition to the amendments required to bring the County Ordinance into conformance with new state law, staff proposed adding definitions and language to the Ordinance allowing the option of planting approved street trees in the Urban Growth Area and Town Growth Areas. The proposed language is very similar to the City FCO and will be added to the preferred sequence of techniques and areas of mitigation in Article 10.
- Comments from the State Forest Conservation Program Coordinator included a reminder that additional reporting requirements required by House Bill 972, passed in 2008 must be included in the language of Article 16 and Article 17 of the County FCO. Therefore Article 16 is amended to include text that DNR shall be notified of any enforcement activity within 15 days, and Article 17 Annual Report contents is amended to include areas in the 100 year floodplain, details of any enforcement activity, and use of a GIS format to describe new forest areas.

View a copy of the proposed [Forest Conservation Ordinance](#).



\$3.7 MILLION USED TO PURCHASE AGRICULTURE EASEMENTS

The Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Program (MALPP) has made 5 easement offers to Washington County landowners. Using combined County, State and Federal funds \$3.7 million will be used to purchase easements on approximately 600 acres. To increase administrative efficiency during tough budget times, MALPP is combining the Fiscal Year 2009 and 2010 cycles. Landowners will have the opportunity to begin applying for the Fiscal Year 2011 cycle in January 2010 with an application deadline of June 1, 2010.

WIND/SOLAR AMENDMENTS APPROVED

The proposed alternative energy amendments that were reported on in our [Winter 2009](#) Newsletter were adopted by the County Commissioners on June 16, 2009. A copy of the approved [Ordinance](#) (ORD-09-04) is available on the County Attorney's webpage.



REVISED TEXT AMEND- MENT FOR THE IM ZONING APPROVED

On July 21, 2009 the County Commissioners approved a text amendment to the performance standards section of Industrial Mineral Zone (IM). A copy of the [Ordinance](#) (ORD-09-06) is available on the County Attorney's webpage.

NEW PLANNING DEPARTMENT MODIFICATION FORM

Our Department has revised our application for a Subdivision Ordinance Variance. The application is now titled Application for Subdivision Ordinance Modification, and requires the applicant to include two (2) sketch plans drawn to scale showing: the dimensions and shape of proposed lot with acreage; size and location of existing and/or future structures; existing/proposed roadways and associated access right-of-ways or easements; existing/proposed entrance/exit to property; natural or topographic peculiarities of the lot in question. Copies of the New [Modification Form](#) are available on the Planning Department website.



UPCOMING MEETINGS

PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING:

- AUGUST 31, 2009
- OCTOBER 5, 2009
- NOVEMBER 2, 2009

All Regular Monthly Planning Commission meetings will be held in the County Administrative Annex conference room located at 80 West Baltimore Street. Meetings begin promptly at 7:00 p.m.

REZONING/TEXT AMENDMENT PUBLIC HEARING:

Joint Public Hearing on the [Water & Sewer Plan](#) update:

- SEPTEMBER 14, 2009

Rezoning Public Meetings will be held at the Washington County Court House in Court Room # 1, 95 West Washington Street (unless noted otherwise on the agenda). Please use the entrance located on Summit Ave. Meetings begin promptly at 7:00pm

HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

- SEPTEMBER 2, 2009
- OCTOBER 7, 2009
- NOVEMBER 4, 2009

The Historic District Commission meets the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00pm in the Administrative Annex Conference Room 1A.

CONSULTANT OUTREACH MEETINGS

- OCTOBER 16, 2009

Outreach meetings will be held in the County Administrative Annex conference room located at 80 West Baltimore Street. Meeting begins promptly at 9:00am

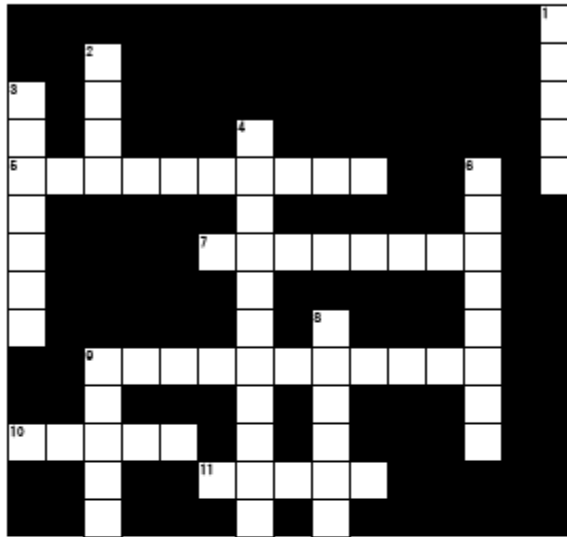
CROSSWORD PUZZLE

By: Sara Edelman

Print out our crossword puzzle and give it a try! Answers will be in the Fall 2009 Newsletter.

Answers to the Spring 2009 puzzle are on the following page.

Agriculture of Washington County



Across

- 5 The Rural Legacy Program was created to focus not only on agricultural land but natural, cultural and this?
- 7 In order to apply for preservation easements you must be in a Washington County Agricultural _____ PROGRAM, this PROGRAM is a commitment of 10 years to preserve the farming operation.
- 9 Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Easements pay for the _____ rights of the farm, so no additional houses can be built except as allowed by the deed of easement.
- 10 There are requirements to enter the PROGRAM. One is that the farm must have fifty percent of _____ farmland soil.
- 11 The flag of Washington County includes what to mean the agriculture, mountains and woodlands?

Down

- 1 Additionally the farm has to be outside of the _____ Growth Area.
- 2 Washington County has the second highest POPULATION of _____ in Maryland.
- 3 Washington County's oldest mill dates back to 1760 a name change occurred in 1850 and is now commonly known as this Mill.
- 4 Is the science, production and study of grapes used to make wine.
- 6 Washington County has received the most federal funds in the state of Maryland from the ISTE A program for scenic byways around this historical place.
- 8 Washington County's orchards provide 70% of Maryland's total. What is it?
- 9 The POPULATION mentioned has a variety of kinds. To get ice cream and milk you need this type of population.

