



# Visions & Decisions

Volume 1 Issue 3 Winter 2009

*The Washington County Planning Department's Quarterly E-Newsletter*

## ALTERNATE ENERGY AMENDMENTS TO BE ADDED TO ZONING ORDINANCE

Planning Department staff will be presenting alternate energy amendments to the Planning Commission during their March 2, 2009 public meeting. Due to new State and Federal environmental polices and an increase in local citizen interest in alternate energy sources; Small Wind Energy Systems and Solar Collection Systems will be proposed to be added to the County's Zoning Ordinance.



**Small Wind Energy Systems** are to be defined as a single-towered wind energy system that is used to generate electricity, has a rated nameplate capacity of 50 kilowatts or less, and has a total height of 150 feet or less. Small Wind Energy Systems are proposed as an accessory use in all zoning districts. Each property would be limited to two systems.

**Solar Collection Systems** are to be defined as a panel or other solar energy device, the primary purpose of which is to provide for collection, inversion, storage, and distribution, of solar energy for electricity generation, space heating, space cooling or water heating. Solar Collection units will be permitted to be located on the roof of structures as long as they do not exceed more than twelve (12) feet above the roof line, do not exceed the maximum height permitted in the zoning district and are limited in size to 15% of the cross section of the roof.

View [proposed amendments](#).

### GREEN INITIATIVES



On January 12, 2009 Governor O'Malley introduced the State's 2009 Smart, Green

and Growing legislative initiatives. The legislative agenda includes a number of smart growth initiatives, including protecting the integrity of Comprehensive Plans, modernizing the State's Planning Visions, and developing Smart Growth markers for state and local governments. For more information on Smart, Green and Growing legislation visit the following site:

[www.green.maryland.gov/](http://www.green.maryland.gov/)

### WHY SHOULD YOU CONSIDER AN ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCE?

#### **Why should I choose wind?**

An on-site or small wind power energy system can provide consumers in windy locations with a cushion against electric power price increases. Depending on your wind resource, a small wind energy system can lower your electricity bill by 50%-90% and help you avoid the high costs of having utility lines extended to remote locations. Wind energy systems not only help customers reduce their electricity purchases from utilities, they also help reduce U.S. dependence on fossil fuels, and they are non-polluting. Over its life, a small residential turbine can offset approximately 1.2 tons of air pollutants and 200 tons of greenhouse gases.

#### **How do wind turbines work?**

Wind is created by unequal heating of the Earth's surface by the sun. Wind turbines convert the kinetic energy in wind into mechanical power that runs a generator to produce clean, nonpolluting electricity. The wind turns the blades, which spin a shaft connected to a generator that makes electricity.

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## RURAL LEGACY PROGRAM AWARDED \$ 460,700 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009

Washington County received a Rural Legacy Program award in the amount of \$460,700 for Fiscal Year 2009 at an award ceremony by Governor Martin O'Malley on December 3rd. Senator Don Munson was on hand for the award presentation. The funds will help Washington County to continue purchasing easements in the Antietam Battlefield area as we work towards our overall county goal of 50,000 acres under permanent preservation.

Including the FY 2009 award, our 11<sup>th</sup> since the inception of the Rural Legacy Program, Washington County has now preserved in perpetuity more than 4,000 acres on 30 farms in the Antietam Battlefield area through grant awards exceeding \$11 million.

The Governor also announced the launch of another Open Space program---Green print. A portion of the Governor's announcement states: "It is from our commitment to protect the Earth that we have created [Green Print](#) a first of its kind interactive land conservation map that will help us achieve our shared vision for a Smart, Green & Growing Maryland.

Some four hundred years after Captain John Smith first mapped the Chesapeake Bay, yesterday we launched a state-wide iMap, a Green Print of Maryland every bit as revolutionary, and carrying with it the same potential to unlock the doors of possibility for future generations.

Using cutting edge technology and timeless principles for targeting progress and measuring performance, Green Print shows how Maryland's land conservation programs and its partners are working together to conserve our most important ecological, cultural and historic landscapes -- lands that will help us restore the health of the Chesapeake and Coastal Bays, provide critical habitat for fish and wildlife, and improve the quality of life for all Marylanders.

By mapping every parcel and plot of land in our State, we are creating a tool that can be used by our partners, including Maryland's citizens, to help preserve land and direct new growth."

### WHY SHOULD YOU CONSIDER AN ALTERNATIVE ENERGY SOURCE?

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#### **Why should I choose Solar power?**

A small solar electric or photovoltaic (PV) system can be a reliable and pollution-free producer of electricity for your home or office. Small PV systems also provide a cost-effective power supply in locations where it is expensive or impossible to send electricity through conventional power lines.

#### **How do small solar collection systems work?**

Solar collection (electric) systems, also known as photovoltaic (PV) systems, convert sunlight into electricity. Solar cells are the basic building block of PV systems, and are made up of semiconducting silicon. When sunlight is absorbed by this material the solar energy knocks electrons loose from their atoms allowing electrons to flow through the material to produce electricity. The process of converting light to electricity is called the photovoltaic effect.

For more information on Renewable Energy Sources visit the U.S Department of Energy's website at:

<http://www.eere.energy.gov/>





**MEET OUR STAFF  
SERIES 3 OF 3  
AGRICULTURE PRESERVATION  
AND  
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT STAFF**

**AGRICULTURE PRESERVATION STAFF**



**Eric Seifarth** is our Rural Preservation Administrator. He is responsible for administrating seven different preservation programs, and a pending Trans-ferrable Development Rights Program. Eric has worked in our department’s Agriculture Preservation section for almost 20 years. He graduated from the University of Maryland with a BS in Agriculture and Science Education. Eric is an outdoor enthusiast, has 3 children and resides in Washington County with his family.



**Sara Edelman** works as a Land Preservation Planner. She holds both a Bachelors and Masters in Geo-environmental Studies from Shippensburg University, and has been working for the department for 3 years. Sara works in conjunction with the Rural Preservation Administrator and is responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of the Preservation Database. She is also responsible for the monitoring and inspection of properties per the deed of easement provisions. Sara works with local farmers interested in programs and assists in answering questions and processing requests pertaining to land preservation.



**ADMINISTRATIVE  
ASSISTANT  
STAFF**

**Debra Eckard, Misti Brandenburg** (not pictured), and **Stephanie Lapole** make up our administrative assistant staff. The administrative staff is the “Hub” of our office , and are usually the first staff members that will greet and assist the public. They direct citizens to the appropriate staff member or department, work tirelessly on meeting minutes, keep our filing systems in order, help route and keep track of development submittals, and assist staff with various other projects. No wonder a special day is dedicated to them in April!



## **UPCOMING TEXT AMENDMENTS**

**At the upcoming Public Meeting to be held by the Planning Commission on March 16, 2009, numerous text amendments to the County's Zoning Ordinance & Subdivision Ordinance will be presented and discussed.**

### **ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENTS:**

With progress comes change. Over the last several years, Washington County has seen its fair share of change when it comes to land use policies. In response to these changes, two separate text amendments are being proposed to the County Zoning Ordinance. The first set of amendments covers many different sections of the Ordinance that encompasses a wide variety of topics. The purpose of the amendments is to 'clean up' and clarify several sections that have ambiguous, outdated, or incorrect information. Highlights of these amendments are: clarifying the role of residential uses in Rural Business districts, elaborating on regulations regarding accessory uses, and updating definitions related to building height, lot types, yard types, and yard measurements.

The second set of amendments being proposed relates specifically to our off-street parking and loading area regulations. This section has not had a major update since its initial establishment in 1973. Changes in land use policies, environmental planning, and technology have prompted a major update of our parking and loading standards. Included in the amendments are more and better defined types of land uses and their related parking standards, standards for uses with drive-thru queuing facilities, and updated definitions relating to the various types of vehicles, retail and wholesale sales, and floor areas. Also, in response to growing environmental concerns, provisions are being added to promote more eco-friendly parking facilities through better design standards that decrease impervious surface, allow for shared parking facilities, allow for alternate paving mechanisms, and require bicycle parking facilities. For further information on these proposed Zoning Text amendments, check the [Planning Department website](#) or contact Senior Planner Jill Baker: [jbaker@washco-md.net](mailto:jbaker@washco-md.net)

### **SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENTS:**

Included are expanded definitions of Lot Area (gross & net), Corner Lot, Reversed Frontage and Through Lots, Lot of Record and Lot Lines (front, rear, side and zero). Amendments to Article III – Procedures for submission of Subdivision Applications, will update the list of information required to be included on a preliminary/final and simplified plat. This will include the subdivision plat number, floodplain community panel number, soil percentages, gross and net lot area, and Subdivision and Zoning Ordinance variances that were approved for the development. Additional language is proposed for the Preliminary and Final Plat Approval Sections. Currently, the Ordinance requires that a preliminary plat must be approved or disapproved by the Planning Commission within sixty (60) days. Proposed wording would specifically require that all subdivision regulations be complied with prior to approval being given and that the sixty day time frame would begin upon acceptance of the plat by the Planning Department. Also being recommended by Staff is that a final plat will need to be recorded with the Clerk of the Circuit Court within ninety days (90) days of approval instead of the current two (2) year requirement. If not, the plat approval shall be void. After this recordation, the developer must submit to the Department within five days, 10 copies and a reproducible of the plat, along with a Digital CADD File as specified in the County's Subdivision Digital Submittal Policy. For further information on these proposed Subdivision text amendments, check the [Planning Department website](#) or contact Senior Planner Lisa Kelly: [lkelly@washco-md.net](mailto:lkelly@washco-md.net)



## **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

### **PLANNING COMMISSION MEETINGS:**

- **MARCH 2, 2009**
- **APRIL 6, 2009**
- **MAY 4, 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 MEETING:**

- **MARCH 2 & 16 2009-FILILING DEADLINE FOR THIS MEETING: CLOSED**
- **SEPTEMBER 14, 2009-FILING DEADLINE FOR THIS MEETING: JULY 12, 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 Avenue. Meetings will begin promptly at 7:00 p.m.**

### **HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION**

- **MARCH 4, 2009**
- **APRIL 1, 2009**
- **MAY 6, 2009**

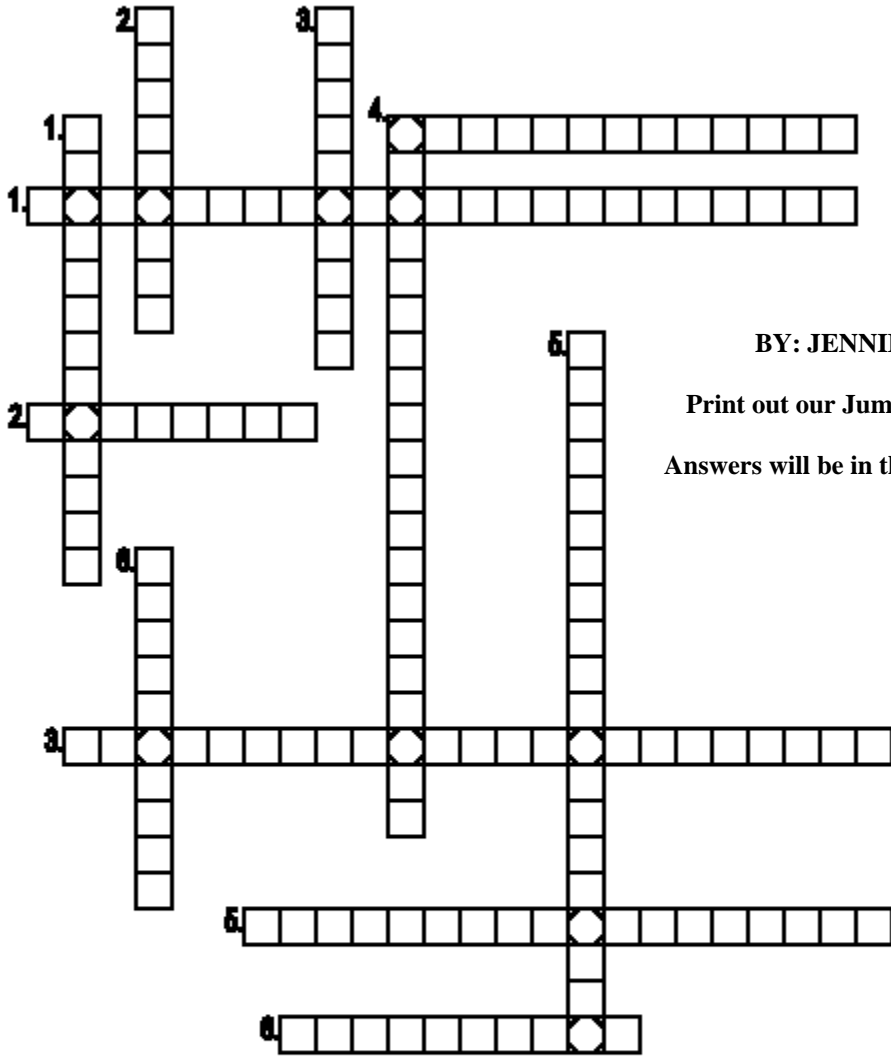
**The Historic District Commission meets the first Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the Administrative Annex Conference Room 1A.**

### **CONSULTANT OUTREACH MEETINGS**

- **APRIL 17, 2009**

**Outreach meetings will be held in the County Administrative Annex conference room located at 80 West Baltimore Street. Meetings begin promptly at 9:00 am. \*Consultants attendance is crucial for the continuance of these meetings**

# Planning Jumble – Environmental Considerations

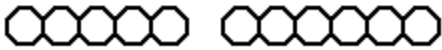


BY: JENNIFER KINZER

Print out our Jumble and give it a try!

Answers will be in the Spring 2009 edition

**Bonus:**



FALL 2008 PUZZLE ANSWERS ON FOLLOWING PAGE

**Clues**

Down:

1. A federal law governing water pollution
2. Involves processing used materials into new products
3. Flat land adjacent to a stream or river
4. Programs to help regulate the quality and quantity of runoff due to precipitation
5. A federal law designed to protect animals from extinction
6. Drainage divides or basins

Across:

1. A zone delineated to protect a drinking water supply from contamination
2. Areas of land where the soil is saturated with moisture
3. An effective means of preventing or reducing the amount of water pollution generated by non-point sources
4. Strips of vegetated land that help to prevent pollutants from reaching a body of water
5. A state law the requires local governments to protect and maintain wooded resources
6. The federal Clean Air Act requires that this be monitored for commonly occurring air pollutants

Bonus Clue:

Land areas displaying a large gradient or pitch

