

## GARRETT COUNTY PLANNING AND LAND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE

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### Summary of Comments Regarding the Visioning Process for the Garrett County Comprehensive Plan

**The Garrett County Planning Commission** held a special, public meeting regarding the Planning Commission Comprehensive Plan on Wednesday, Feb 26, 2007, at 7:00 pm, in the County Commissioners Meeting Room. Members and guests in attendance have signed an attendance sheet. The meeting was held at the auditorium of Garrett College to receive public input to the policies for the 2008 Comprehensive Plan. John Nelson, Planning Director, welcomed the approximately 120 attendees, and announced the upcoming meetings for the Comprehensive Plan; also see the attached agenda for the meeting. Troy Ellington, Planning Commission Vice Chair, explained the purpose and importance of the meeting and that the Planning Commission was very interested in the community's input. Clive Graham, ERM, described the Comprehensive Plan process and timetable.

#### Speakers:

1. DeCorsey Bolden stated that he is a member of Garrett Citizens for Smart Growth. This group is opposed to Oakland by-pass. He feels that the project is much too costly at \$42 million. He notes that the road is two miles long and goes through two farms. Believes there is a better alternative route, via 495 and Route 135. A letter has been submitted to the Commission outlining their position.  
  
Mr. Bolden feels the Streetscape program would solve many of these traffic problems on US 219 through Oakland. He feels the bypass is comparable to a monumental error as was made when the county jail was added to the courthouse. Mr. Bolden encourages that people attend the April 12<sup>th</sup> meeting with the county commissioners in Oakland. He also noted that the Mayor and Council of the Town of Mountain Lake Park are opposed to the bypass.
2. Terry Rodeheaver spoke in behalf of the Garrett County Farm Bureau. He noted that there 191 members and support agricultural, economic issues. Does not support increase in lot sizes because it would reduce equity. Maryland Secretary of Agricultural Riley stated that this type of zoning causes farmers to sell large amounts of land. He feels that this would also be counter to affordable housing. Mr. Rodeheaver feels there are other ways to preserve agricultural land such as offering realistic fund for easements and land preservation. Other methods could be considered to increase the profitability of farming. The Farm Bureau understands difference between density and lot size. They feel the need to preserve the farm as an enterprise and are very sensitive to the need to protect and preserve the rural and agricultural landscape.
3. Ronald Boyer lives near New Germany State Park. Mr. Boyer notes the farm losses in Garrett County. He feels that growth will happen, but the county needs to preserve

quality of life by ensuring future adequate water quantity and quality for all users, including people and livestock. He recommends water appropriation and acquiring other types of water quality data by monitoring and with routine inspections of ground water. He advocates protecting streams and lakes by improving stormwater runoff quantity and quality. He suggests the plan should address water conservation issues and failing septic fields in the county. Mr. Boyer also feels that the update of the Comprehensive Plan should include updating the land use maps, for the rural, agricultural, and agricultural resource areas. He would also like to see the maps made available in digital form.

4. Liz McDowell co-authored a letter to the Commission with Ronald Boyer. The letter suggests protection of scenic and recreational values. She supports a decrease in density from 1 to 10 acres in rural areas. She also supports mandatory clustering for development lots and a limit on lot sizes. She is opposed to unchecked development and suggests that taxes may not be enough to pay for the hidden costs of residential development. She fully supports programs to control exotic and invasive species in the area. She hopes the county will promote conservation landscaping and green infrastructure while protecting scenic views Green Infrastructure. Supports programs to limit light pollution and preserve the dark, night sky. She supports small wind energy and hopes that Program Open Space funding could be used to connect preservation areas throughout the county with greenways that would be at least 1100 feet wide. Ms. McDowell encourages the county to make the Comprehensive Plan legally binding so that it is enforceable.
5. Ken Braitman is a resident of eastern Garrett County and owns approximately 25 acres on Savage River. He feels that people are moving here because the area is attractive and he is concerned that the current residents may harm the things that make the area attractive. Mr. Braitman is concerned about the availability of groundwater. He also has concerns about the Crown Vetch that has been planted on the roadside near his farm. He noted that runoff from paved shoulders on county roads creates gullies and excess runoff. He feels that we can do things better by using science to solve problems.
6. Anne Bristow lives near Finzel Swamp in the Savage River basin. She asks does Allegany County pay for Garrett water from Piney Dam. She questions if regional approaches are taken to address water quantity. She feels that dry years and seasonal data also need to be considered. She thinks that the amount of water in Savage River near her home has been diminished.
7. Will Hebdon, lives near the Garrett County landfill. He feels that the county needs to improve conditions around the landfill. Some of his concerns include landfill gases, air quality, and height and setback restrictions. Mr. Hebdon also feels that the county needs to upgrade the water quality for the Mountain Lake Park area. He has experienced a strong chlorine odor from this water. Mr. Hebdon also feels there should be improved oversight of the NPDES program and availability of digital mapping.
8. Joyce Bishoff is chairperson for the Garrett/ Preston Rural Development Coalition. She noted that the coalition has organized six community meetings regarding the Comprehensive Plan. She feels that many people do not understand the present rules and regulations regarding zoning and subdivision in the county. Ms. Bishoff reported on the results of a survey conducted by the Coalition. She feels that land use issues are too complex for the short time period and a need to be further evaluated. Ms. Bishoff thinks that the Comprehensive Plan maps need to be reviewed. She noted that the

group has mixed views on density. The group supports county financial support for agricultural programs. Need a more detailed review of these complex topics. If density is lowered, then clustering could be used to achieve the intended density. If density is changed, it should be done incrementally, allowing infilling.

9. Jane Avery is a citizen of Garrett County. She feels that to handle these problems, the planners need to make good decisions. Ms. Avery cautions against entropy and feels the houses in her neighborhood look the same and are mostly unoccupied. She feels the county should encourage neighborhoods and also build on the existing communities. She feels the county should preserve more land. Ms. Avery does not want windmills on Backbone Mountain. She feels gated communities are not necessary and is against the Oakland by-pass project.
10. Kevin Dodge lives in Bittinger and represents the Allegany Highlands Conservancy. He feels we live in a beautiful, resource rich county. Mr. Dodge believes that growth has brought benefits, but also costs. He feels the County should use financial incentives to achieve goals. Mr. Dodge encourages the Planning Commission to hold small group meetings around the county and also update the county maps. He feels the Commission should make a careful assessment of groundwater and that more land should be designated as Agricultural Resource. His group endorses density reduction to one dwelling unit per ten acres. Though he recognizes private property rights he thinks there is a need to find reasonable balance.
11. Gary Love, representing the Youghiogheny River Watershed Association, has given detailed comments to the Planning Commission Control. He feels that there should be more control of the creation of impervious surfaces. The group sees the need for the creations of buffers, improved stormwater management techniques, establishment of TMDL criteria, establish impact fees on new development, and development of performance standards. The group meets on the fourth Tuesday of every month at Garrett College.
12. Madonna Poole is a citizen of Garrett County. She is also a Beekeeper. Ms. Poole is reminded of the Hopi word “World Out of Balance” when considering recent development in the county. She noted that the region is losing honeybees, at a terrible rate. She believes that our practices show lack of respect for the land. She is opposed to the “ticky-tacky” on the hills at Wisp Mountain. She feels that we need to promote native species in the region. She is also concerned about affects on water and air quality.
13. Courtney Englar is a native of Carroll County. In the past Carroll County was like Garrett is today, but the county has become built up. He feels that the same scenario can happen here because Pittsburgh and other metropolitan areas are not that far away. He supports the views of the Youghiogheny River Watershed Association and the Garrett/Preston Rural Development Coalition.
14. Marshall Stacey is a Christmas tree farmer in Swanton. Mr. Stacey has relocated from Columbia, Maryland. Each time minimum lot size was increased in that area the land was consumed faster. Mr. Stacey supports a one unit per five acre density standard and supports lot clustering but suggests that lot size should be limited to 1 to 2 acres.
15. Mike Gregory lives in the Grantsville area. He feels that the county must learn from the lessons of the past, such as over-harvesting and poor land practices. He notes that timbering devastated Garrett County, years ago. Mr. Gregory is concerned that this will happen again with unchecked development. Mr. Gregory would like to see a “clean

lot” ordinance imposed and would also like a “shared setback” for residents next to State land. He also feels that the county needs a parks and recreation department.

16. Dr. William Pope of Mountain Lake Park wants to see a continuous planning process. He feels that the county is late on the Comprehensive Plan update. Dr. Pope feels that there is no control over land-use outside the Deep Creek Lake watershed and thinks we need a debate concerning countywide zoning. He feels that the last Comprehensive Plan had desirable goals but was not fully implemented. He feels that inspectors, in general, need to increase enforcement and he also has concerns about ridgeline protection.
17. Barbara Gaffney lives in the New Germany area, having moved from Carroll County. She has seen this same type of development happening in Garrett County. She notes that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Ms. Gaffney sees the need to address Fire and Rescue issues associated with growth.
18. Judy Pittman is a resident on the ridge Wisp Mountain. She notes that most homes there are empty most of the time. Ms. Pittman is concerned that there are not enough activities for children and the area needs more recreation activities.
19. Jerry Plauger is a resident of the county. Mr. Plauger notes that Deep Creek has had zoning since 1975. He feels that we each must make sacrifices to return to the way things were before development. He feels that we are paying to travel at higher speeds on the roads by putting chemicals on the roads to melt snow and ice. Mr. Plauger feels that cinders and other chemicals on the roads impact the water quality in the streams.
20. Madeleine Collins is a McHenry resident and has 30 acres on headwaters of Hoyes Run. Ms. Collins agrees with Bill Pope’s comment regarding the 1995 Comprehensive Plan. She feels that most concerned citizens have unease about the same issues. She noted that Hoyes Run used to have native Brook Trout. She support property rights, but the time comes when community values need to outweigh individual property rights.
21. Dennis Yoder is a landscape architect in the area. Mr. Yoder would like to see more creativity in architecture and land planning. He feels that the community needs to bring the human spirit into the planning process.