

Barry Glassman

County Executive

Friends of Harford-Election 2018 – Land Use Questions

1. What are your top priorities for legislation for the County?

While not a legislative action, we are presently pursuing short-term initiatives that will accelerate our efforts to solve some ongoing concerns in Harford County. This fall, we will be engaging students at the University of Maryland through their Partnership for Action Learning in Sustainability (PALS) program to assist with multiple projects affecting several County agencies. The PALS partnership will allow us to evaluate and improve ongoing programs and services and provide the necessary framework for launching new initiatives.

2. When we have questions about specific issues, how do we get your answers?

I have an 'open door' policy and believe in transparent government; that includes access to me or members of my administration. If there are concerns that can be addressed by specific agencies or department specialists, it's often more effective to reach out to those people directly. If there are questions about broad countywide concerns – or if there is good news to share – I always do my best to make myself available or respond in a timely and thoughtful manner.

3. Would you, as County Executive, support better ways to provide the public with user-friendly notification of decisions by DAC and the Zoning Board of Appeals? If so, how?

One of my primary objectives has been to provide more and better information in a convenient manner, and I think we do a good job of that now. Plans reviewed by the Development Advisory Committee are available on our website via the 'Track-it!' tool, and comments from those agencies are provided during the public meeting. That said, we are always looking for better ways to inform people about things that might impact their community. In fact, we just rolled-out an updated version of 'Track-it!' that's more user-friendly and provides more information that will help keep our citizens informed about projects and plans. The Zoning Board of Appeals is part of County Council's role; the case docket and previous decisions are available through their website.

4. Would you favor term limits for County Council members? Explain.

Yes. The County Executive is term-limited, and I think this is an effective way to ensure more of our community leaders have an opportunity to serve.

5. How do you propose to solve the County's traffic problems?

The four most congested roads in Harford County are maintained by the State (MD 155, MD 924, MD 22, and MD 543), which greatly limits our ability to make improvements directly. Still, in the last three years, the County has successfully secured funding to study two of those corridors (MD 22 and MD 924); this has allowed the us to identify solutions and work with the SHA district office on improvements (e.g. MD 22 @ Thomas Run Road). For longer term solutions, we continue to push for the highest priority projects through the State's budgeting process. For roadways under our control, we've completed significant projects that have helped alleviate some safety and congestion issues, such as, the Tollgate Road connection between Plumtree Road and Bel Air South Parkway. We are also pursuing better ways to manage traffic by less capital-intensive means, such as adjusting Harford Transit LINK routes and schedules to synchronize with travel patterns and experimenting with new commuter bus routes that better serve employee and employer needs.

6. The Master Plan, HarfordNEXT, calls for a study on expanding the development envelope in an area beginning at I-95/MD 543 moving northwest along MD 543/Schucks Road to Harford Community College

and beyond to US 1 at Hickory. What is your view on expanding the development envelope and specifically the aforementioned MD 543 proposal?

Starting this fall, the County will be working with students and faculty from the University of Maryland and the PALS program; and, with their assistance, we will be initiating a study of the Creswell area. A primary purpose of the study will be to examine existing issues relating to traffic congestion and fragmented land use patterns that are the result of poor planning practices of the past. The study will also provide a framework for accommodating new growth if or when the Development Envelope is expanded. We recognize that some problems, created in part by previous growth in and around Bel Air, are already impacting the Creswell area. Community character and other important resources – agricultural, natural, historic – are being negatively impacted by these ongoing issues and could be overwhelmed by haphazard growth in the future. This underscores the importance of developing a plan that solves current problems and orchestrates a responsible path forward for future growth.

7. Would you agree to return the citizens' right to an interpretation of the Zoning Code by amending the code? If not, why?

The Zoning Code currently allows for a final written determination regarding a proposed use or legal non-conformance. This is intended to provide guidance to property owners or potential owners of a property. Similarly, County staff can provide assistance navigating specific regulations or procedures. Whether it's installing a fence, opening a small business, or building a home, our aim is to constructively aid those doing business with the County.

8. Do you feel it is time for noise and lighting legislation in Harford County?

Maintaining and enhancing our quality of life is important, and I recognize that unobstructed light or noise can have a negative impact. Fortunately, both are already regulated. Section 193-8 of the Harford County Code addresses noise in residential areas. Lighting regulations are found throughout the Zoning Code within the specific requirements for a given zoning district.

9. Do you approve of General Industrial (GI) zoning adjacent to residential communities or within a Village District? If not, how do you reconcile your disapproval with HarfordNEXT and recent Comprehensive Zoning Review decisions?

Quality of life is a primary theme of HarfordNEXT and we are working now on implementations that will maintain and enhance the things that make Harford County a great place to live, work, and play. A natural extension of that is to mitigate the impact of conflicting uses on adjacent properties. This is why Harford County, like most jurisdictions, segregates uses by zoning district, keeping intense commercial and industrial districts separate from residential districts. And, for most of the County, this is the case; there are relatively few areas where property zoned General Industrial (GI) directly abuts a residential district. Over time, changes in zoning initiated by property owners bring about some mixing of the districts. Yet, while it is not always ideal, different zoning districts on adjacent properties are not necessarily incompatible. That is, the choice is not binary. I want all Harford County communities to thrive and be healthy, that includes creating economic opportunity and prosperity. As the County continues to grow and mature, new uses will intersect with old ones; and, we will continue to work to strengthen communities to ensure everyone is afforded the high quality of life they deserve.

10. Do you approve of reducing the number of County inspections on construction sites when only 34 percent of contractors are in compliance with the Erosion and Sedimentation Ordinance?

We are not reducing the number of County inspections on construction sites, and would not approve of doing so. Our proposed FY2019 budget includes an increase in funding for Erosion & Sediment Control and Stormwater Management inspections. Last year, the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) changed their Code requirements related to the mandated frequency of inspections. We, through action of the County Council, incorporated these State changes into our County Code, which gave us flexibility to assign resources to the most difficult sites and the most non-compliant contractors. We don't know the source of the "34 percent" compliance statistic. Please note that the most recent survey by the independent organization Community & Environmental Defense Services showed Harford County at 44% compliance, the highest in the Central Maryland region and 16% greater than the prior year. This is an additional indicator of the value and effectiveness of our targeted approach to increase our frequency of inspection of non-compliant contractors.