



SILVER SPRING CITIZENS ADVISORY BOARD

May 12, 2009

Mr. Isiah Leggett
County Executive
Executive Office Building
101 Monroe Street 2nd Floor
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Mr. Phil Andrews
Council President
Stella B. Werner Council Office Building
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Messrs. Leggett and Andrews:

We are writing to oppose the proposed elimination of the Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee and the Silver Spring Transportation Management District Committee. Although we appreciate the desire to streamline the committee system, and we are gratified by the vote of confidence in our own advisory board's efforts to draw neighborhood input and represent the Silver Spring community, we oppose the elimination of our sister groups for the following reasons:

- 1) Montgomery County needs more democratic input, not less. Local committees and boards provide more avenues for citizen participation in government. As an unincorporated part of the county, we need all the representation we can get to represent our pluralism.
- 2) The proposed effort to streamline committees is uneven, error-prone, and unfair. For example, it includes an effort to eliminate the Silver Spring Recreation Advisory Board that no longer exists. It also singles out the Silver Spring Urban District Advisory Committee as the only CBD committee to be eliminated. Why is Silver Spring distinguished and targeted for "streamlining" instead of Wheaton or Bethesda?
- 3) Fears of wasted or duplicated county employee efforts are unfounded. Although regional center staffers often attend the meetings of two or three different local committees per month, their presence is particularly helpful because those committees serve different populations and have different foci. For example, SSUDAC meets during work hours to better accommodate local businesses, while our Citizens Advisory Board meets during the evenings to better accommodate residents. As a result of our differences and different constituencies, we sometimes disagree on local issues focus on different priorities.
- 4) An elementary cost/benefit analysis shows the great worth of these resident, business, and citizen committees. There are two inputs into these committees: volunteer labor and county employee labor. Volunteer labor exceeds employee labor by greater than 10:1, so the "matching" free labor lost by elimination is extreme. The county benefits tremendously from the input, learning, analysis, and active participation of the many

Regional Services/ Redevelopment Program

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volunteer committee members who represent their communities or constituencies. The people benefit from the face-to-face encounters, presentations, and information distributed by county officials. These benefits far outweigh the minor costs of administrative support and occasional visits or presentations by public officials – such as police officers, county council members, or transportation planners – who should be meeting with local groups anyway as part of their jobs.

Again, we respect the desire to streamline the committee and board system, but urge that it be done with greater care to preserve county outreach and community input.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'D. Unger', written over a large, light-colored circular mark.

Darian Unger
Chair

cc:

Councilmember Roger Berliner
Councilmember Marc Elrich
Councilmember Valerie Ervin
Councilmember Nancy Floreen
Councilmember Mike Knapp
Councilmember George Levanthal
Councilmember Duchy Trachtenberg