

Testimony of Steven McKay Regarding Zoning Map Amendment R-16-01(A)

Good evening, I am here to speak against the proposal to add 25 new homes in the Market District of the Villages of Urbana. Now, right off the bat, you may think I'm being unreasonable. After all, Mr. Natelli has twice now reduced the number of homes he's proposing. This is true. But bear with me and perhaps you'll have a better idea where I'm coming from, and why I'm opposing these homes.

For starters, I'm not opposing the homes on the grounds that Mr. Natelli should do something different in this space. Personally, I do think there are better uses for the space but I'm setting that aside. I accept that he's had plans for this usage for some time and I'm not going to argue that point anymore. In fact, I even accept that if it's a given that he'll develop this space, then he might as well add some live-work and, potentially, multi-family residential units. That makes sense to me. But here's the key – not now. Not now, not in 2020 and not any time in the near future.

It's all about the schools. In their December 2, 2016 letter to Mr. Superczynski, the Frederick County Public Schools painted a dire picture for the school situation in Urbana. Urbana High School – and this surprised me – is expected to have a deficit of 1000 seats in the next 15 years. Urbana Middle School will be short 500 seats, and the three elementary schools will be full.

The planning staff report added to the challenges. They looked toward two proposed developments, as a suggestion that planned capacity could possibly help the situation in Urbana. Specifically, staff cited the middle school symbol on the map over the Blentlinger property. Well, the Blentlinger development may never happen. It is currently sitting before Maryland's highest court to determine its fate. That's after the Court of Special Appeals ordered that the DRRA be vacated. If the DRRA goes, so may go the development. So we really don't know what will happen with that middle school, that symbol on a map. But here's the kicker – even if it happens, sometime in the far future, the staff report states that it will not provide relief in Urbana. So where will the new middle school capacity come from, you may ask. I submit that there is currently no good answer to that question.

Now let's look at the high school situation. Staff notes another map symbol for a high school at Monrovia Town Center. Again, this development is tied up in the legal process and is highly unlikely to go forward – at least not if we have anything to do with it. Even if it does, the land proffered for the high school site is completely unacceptable. I will not accept my child sitting in a classroom underneath high tension power lines. The health risks are simply too great. So tell me again, where and when will that new high school be built? Does anyone really know? Of course not.

“But Steve, come on, it's only 25 houses.” I'm sure that's what some people will say. Well my answer is this. Mr. Natelli already got his last big approval. He's only just started building 610 new homes across Rt 355 from the VOU. Those homes are a big reason why the school situation will be so dire. Certainly not the only reason – no – there's plenty of other reasons, plenty of residential approvals by Billy and Kirby, and the last BoCC, approvals granted regardless of the impact on our roads and schools.

But you get to a point, a point where you have to say no. You have to look at the criteria for approving this zoning map amendment and where it states that the public facilities will be made adequate, you have to see that the answer is no – they won't be adequate and we don't know when or if they will. And I stress that this is about the zoning approval criteria. This isn't about APFO. You can't simply punt this

issue for the Planning Commission to deal with in a few years. Because when they do, and the development fails the school test, this developer will exercise his right to pay the construction mitigation fee – and he'll build. No, you have to deal with this now. You must accept the fact that the school situation is untenable and you shouldn't allow one more home – not now, and not in 2020 – until there is a solid plan in place at all three school levels – not just elementary. I urge you to deny this application.

Respectfully,

Steven McKay
3810 Shakespeare Way
Monrovia, MD 21770