



Maryland Planning Commissioners Association  
**Hagerstown Workshop: March 29, 2019**

Regional Dialogue Summary

1. What are some processes that have led to successful outcomes in your communities?
  - Requiring plans and development proposals to hold public meetings and conduct thorough community outreach
  - Including a second tier of outreach to engage people that do not typically participate. More successful if you go to them.
    - i. Frederick County example: Comprehensive planning open houses and information stations. Allows for opinions, but not soap boxes. Makes it easier for typically quieter voices to express themselves
    - ii. Baltimore County example: Public meetings in every district as part of quadrennial rezoning
    - iii. Hagerstown example: Electronic surveys reached a new audience
    - iv. Mt Airy example: Intensive charrettes
  - If downzoning, make sure to meet with affected property owners ahead of time
  
2. What are some regional challenges or barriers to your work as a planning commissioner?
  - Agricultural designations. Some farmers claim that they are exempt from town controls or ordinances because of Maryland's agricultural protection laws
    - i. Agricultural equipment on state or county roads must abide by state laws
    - ii. Annual nutrient management plans heavily regulate the application of fertilizer
  - Geography of Western Maryland is a challenge
    - i. Area is at a competitive disadvantage with adjoining states because of statewide regulations
      1. \$15 minimum wage compared to significantly lower minimum wages in West Virginia and Pennsylvania
      2. Cheaper utility rates and lower taxes
      3. These barriers hinder economic development. We don't want only warehouses

- Insufficient opportunities and systems established for peer to peer and county to municipality dialogue
  - Development pressure from the south is impacting Frederick County, which sometimes makes it difficult to respond in a timely fashion
  - Archaic state planning laws
    - i. Special exceptions or conditional use permits are not regulated by a standard manner that the public expects, but by vaguely worded case law on the "appropriate standard" test articulated in Schultz case. Standards would assist decision making
    - ii. Annexation requirements: Enclaves should automatically annex into the municipality that surrounds them rather than be a barrier to an appropriate annexation
    - iii. Change or mistake law is too restrictive. Consistency with comp plan should be enough. Also hinders economic development opportunities
      1. New property owners will argue that change of ownership is enough, and a planning commission must respond to that argument
  - Be careful with text amendments. Need to have long view and consider unintended consequences
  - Competition between counties and cities
    - i. Different priorities
    - ii. Cooperation is minimal
    - iii. Maryland law fosters competition between neighboring jurisdictions. Roads, taxes, and schools
3. What are some examples of collaboration between jurisdictions in your region?
- Major revitalization project (expansion of school and Maryland Theater) in Hagerstown the result of previous Washington County Administrator, who worked on a solution benefitting town and county, and sold the idea
    - i. Pulled together private property owners, legislators, and even the Governor
    - ii. Hagerstown is the center of the county. If it succeeds, the county succeeds
  - Town of Sykesville acquired Springfield Hospital site from the state and resold it. County agreed to complete plan review for the town to help facilitate completion of project
  - Small western towns get excellent support from both county and the state
  - City and county combined Census 2020 effort and complete count committee
4. What have you learned today that you can take with you?
- If you recuse yourself, you should leave the room
  - Identifying needs. Short term rentals, APFOs, affordable housing, 5G technology, solar facilities
  - Don't use personal emails for planning commission communications

- Invite the public to a group review of the Planning Commissioner Education Course