

As a preliminary consideration, we address the Dufresnes' contention that, because the evidence supporting the application was "uncontroverted" (because only witnesses for the Dufresnes testified at the Planning Board hearing), the Planning Board necessarily erred in "ignoring" such evidence and making a decision contrary to that evidence. This view is incorrect. As an administrative agency, the Planning Board has the authority to hear and weigh evidence and make findings and conclusions based on that evidence. The Dufresnes offered witnesses and testimony, and the Planning Board considered this information along with the report of the Planning Board staff and the Planning Board's own expertise. *Annapolis Waterfront, supra*, 284 Md. at 395 ("[B]oard members have expertise in a particular area and ordinarily should be free to exercise their discretion as such."). The question we consider is whether there was "substantial evidence" that would permit a reasoning mind to reach the same conclusion as the Board reached. *Id.* at 399.

The staff report recommended that the Planning Board should deny the Dufresnes' proposal because the staff concluded "the proposed pre-preliminary plan does not adequately promote agricultural use of the property" in accordance with the Olney Master Plan and the AROS Master Plan. The staff report went on to state that:

**The proposed lots encompass 9.3 acres of the overall ±44-acre tract, and proposed density is approximately one dwelling per 11 acres. The farm remainder parcel contains the majority of the overall acreage and one dwelling unit, but approximately half the existing agricultural fields, including most of the prime agricultural soils, would be eliminated to make way for residential lots. The area outside the proposed lots consists mostly of steeply sloping stream valley and associated floodplain, wetlands, rocky soils and forest; and access to the majority of the remaining fields (in the**