

the Planning Commission require adequate public facilities for "major" subdivisions only, and specifically exempts from the public facilities requirements any subdivision plat with three or fewer lots in a nonagricultural zoned area, and four or fewer lots in an agricultural zoned area. The bill also limits the Planning Commission's ability to disapprove a proposed subdivision on the basis of inadequate public facilities only in the case of a final subdivision plat. Current law allows the Commission to disapprove a preliminary plat as well as a final plat on such grounds.

Proponents of the bill argue that the legislation maintains what is said to have been the policy of the Planning Commission since 1978, which was to generally exempt minor subdivisions from adequate public facilities review. In the past several months the Planning Commission has sought to change the policy in order to better control residential development in the County. Because some locally elected officials and others objected to the change, or to the manner in which the change was proposed, Senate Bill 649 was introduced.

While I am sympathetic to some of the arguments advanced by the proponents of the bill, I am concerned that the bill will frustrate the actions of a majority of the County Commissioners and the Planning Commission seeking to provide for environmentally and economically sound and sensible growth in the County. At a minimum the bill will encourage developments in more rural areas and lead to added suburban and rural sprawl. Uncontrolled growth strains the fiscal resources of the State and local governments by creating demand for new schools, roads, emergency services, and other public facilities. The bill also impacts the local government's ability to protect our natural resources. For example, by exempting minor subdivisions from the adequate facilities requirement, the bill will encourage residential developments in outlying greenways, and farmland in particular, that rely on individual septic systems. Yet State and local governments spend about \$36 million a year on failing septic systems, and the State spends millions of dollars to upgrade sewage treatment systems in order to improve the water quality of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. In light of ever-increasing development pressures, it makes fiscal and environmental sense to direct growth to those areas which can be served more efficiently by existing or planned public infrastructure. Many citizens have written to me urging a veto because of similar concerns.

Arguments advanced by some proponents focus on the impact the proposed change in policy by the Planning Commission will have on farmers in Carroll County. They argue that currently there is a greater demand for the purchase of preservation easements than there are funds available. I am sensitive to the impact this can have on some of the farming community. This bill, however, extends the exemption from adequate public facilities to all minor subdivisions, whether or not located on farmlands.

During the 1997 Session of the General Assembly, I intend to introduce legislation that will address the issues of directed growth and neighborhood conservation. The problems raised in this bill will most certainly be the subject of further debate next session. I will look forward to working with local governments as well as members of the General Assembly in fashioning a proposal that encourages growth in suitable areas, protects our natural resources, and preserves to the local governments the appropriate level of control over local planning and zoning issues. In this case, Carroll County is in the process of revising its comprehensive plan, a public process that should address the concerns raised by the proponents of this legislation. This particular bill, however, will impede the efforts