

Coalition Update

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<http://citizenscoalition.freesevers.com>

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Citizens Coalition annual meeting Sept. 11 to hear Coastal area DelDOT plans, projects

As a follow-up of Citizens Coalition's efforts to keep the public abreast of development in Coastal Sussex, two representatives involved with the planning process for needed infrastructure will speak at the Citizens Coalition annual dinner meeting, Sunday September 11 at the Virden Conference Center in Lewes. The evening, will begin with a cash bar cocktail hour at 5:30, followed by a buffet dinner at 6:30 and speaker presentations at 7:30.



Ralph Reeb

The featured speaker will be Ralph Reeb, planning director for DelDOT. With the Delaware Department of Transportation for the past 15 years, Ralph Reeb has had a variety of responsibilities including policy analysis and program evaluation, and comprehensive planning with various units of state and local government. His work has included some of the Department's key policy initiatives including strategies for complying with the federal Clean Air Act and responding to various federal transportation bills.

As planning director he oversees the teamwork required to execute State Transportation projects and often works with the public or citizen groups to satisfy their needs and concerns.

Citizens Coalition has conducted annual meetings since its inception in 1994. This year's meeting will be held at the Virden Center at the University of Delaware's College of

Marine Studies. A buffet style dinner will be served. Cost to attend the meeting is \$40. The buffet includes sliced roast beef au jus, baked flounder with spinach and cheese stuffing vegetarian bow tie pasta, vegetable side dishes, salad and assorted deserts, coffee, tea, iced tea.

Ten dollars of the meeting cost is a direct tax-deductible contribution to the Coalition, a nonprofit 501 (c) 3 organization. Reservations must be made in advance and received no later than September 6. Please send checks made payable to Citizens Coalition to Citizens Coalition, PO Box 56, Nassau, DE 19969. Your check is your reservation. For information contact Pat Torelli at 645-2643.

Moderately Priced Housing gets nod from County Council

In the last week of July the Council finally turned the corner on a program known as the Moderately Priced Housing (MHP) initiative to focus on making it possible for local professional people to purchase a home in Coastal Sussex and near town centers throughout Sussex County. Citizens Coalition president Michael Tyler was a member of the committee that created the ordinance, and in fact he instigated the effort and planted the seed to make it happen.

The Council and the public will soon see a draft of a program that will give developers an opportunity to provide reduced price housing that will be integrated into market priced developments. The developers will be "rewarded" with a density bonus so they can make still make money on their developments. But the hope is that these homes will work toward keeping needed professionals in Sussex County and the loss of local families throughout the County. Stay tuned and attend the meetings!

Citizens Coalition looking for a few good men, women

Every year around this time the Citizens Coalition nominating committee begins looking for volunteers. For people to step up and become active. Not a month goes by when someone

in the Coalition isn't complimented for his or her vigilance or for taking a stand against runaway development or a project that's out of character with its surroundings. But "attaboys" are not enough. "We need dedicated citizens to get the community involved with the process here in Sussex County," says Pat Torelli, Coalition vice president.

If you have that fire-in-the-belly atti

tude, or if you have ideas that may stop the erosion of our quality of life and the loss of our sense of place in Sussex County, **the Coalition wants you on its Board of Directors.**

If you can give a few hours a month of your time and ideas, the Coalition wants you. Contact nominating committee chair Lisa Perelli at 644-0975 and she'll fill you in on what it takes to get involved.

Coalition Action Foundation weighs in on important issues facing Coastal Sussex

[NOTE: You often read about the Citizens Coalition taking a position on a certain application that comes before County Council or a position on happenings in Dover. But look closely. Citizens Coalition may testify at public hearings but sometimes its the lobbying arm of the Coalition taking a stand—The Citizens Coalition Action Foundation. This organization is a 501 (c) 4 group whose mission is to lobby and pursue legal recourse to issues confronting Sussex County and beyond.]

Mable Granke is president and member of the Board of Directors of the Action Foundation. She provided the Coalition Update with a review of the organization's recent activities.

Livable Delaware

In other action, representatives of the group met with Constance Holland regarding new proposals for Livable Delaware's emphasis on anti-sprawl legislation. The Action Foundation expressed concern that the reason for the legislation (HB 280) was not definitive. The group stated that the legislation needed more time and thought for more input.

Defining Open Space

As follow up to the Action Foundation meeting of April 17, the board registered concern regarding Sussex County's proposed "Open Space" ordinance by writing to State Planning Coordinator Constance Holland on May 6. The major con-

cern was that the ordinance was seriously flawed. The current ordinance would allow a developer to develop the land if it's not purchased by the community, a developer could target the open space for development. Another problem cited was that the County Council has not defined "open space."

The negative impact of Isaac's Glen

Regarding the city like proportioned Isaac's Glen, the Foundation testified in May and June that such a vast development is akin to forming a town. Testimony addressed the concern that simply a home owners association is incapable of managing such a sizable development.

The Foundation also noted that this development is counter to the County Land Use Plan and placement of intense urban activity in a rural area threatens the viability of the agricultural surroundings and encourages the further loss of farmland and needed agricultural mass to sustain important agricultural activity.

The Foundation cited environmental concerns regarding the North Prong Headwaters and Reynolds Pond. Also of concern is that the lands that serve the area for water recharge are rated "excellent" and must be protected.

The Action Foundation Board members are Richard Faull, Henry Glowiak, Mable Granke, Marnie Laird, Geoff Littlefield, Kay Ryan and Vickie York.

Coalition Speakers Bureau wants to bring its expertise to your next community meeting

Attention homeowner association presidents, officers, non-profit group leaders, meeting program chairmen, Citizens Coalition, Inc. is ready to bring you up to date on issues and developments that may have an impact on traffic, your quality of life or your property values.

Several board members are available to promote the Coalition's community outreach program which is also designed to acquaint residents with the efforts and activities of the organization.

The aim of the "Coalition Speakers Bureau" is to discuss County plans, DelDOT activities and other issues that may concern residents of a community. Issues which may have an impact on water quality, transportation or quality of life are a few of the important topics that the Coalition Speakers Bureau is prepared to discuss. Also bureau speakers can lo-

cate and distribute information not only on the organization but on other key topics.

Coalition Board First Vice President Pat Torelli said that "Having members of Citizens Coalition speak at home owner associations and civic groups such as Lions Clubs, Rotarians, church groups and the like can learn about County development issues or the planning process by having one or more board member speak at their meetings."

Also, as groups are alerted to issues and developments it is a way for them to join with Citizens Coalition to gain strength, support or testimony regarding a specific development. If nothing else, the speakers bureau is an ideal way for an organization to learn more about community activism and County and State plans or actions.

If you are interested in having speakers who are well informed and familiar with your concerns, please visit Coalition at <http://citizenscoalition.freesevers.com> or contact Pat Torelli 645-2643 or Gale White, 644-0777.

I know you've heard all this before...

The Coalition continues to make its presence felt by giving testimony at County Council public hearings as well as Planning and Zoning meetings. Unfortunately the public continues to be noticeably absent from these public hearings. Without citizen concern, our county officials continue to do what they've always done and we continue to get what we've always gotten.

The rumblings are getting louder, however. The group Citizens for a Better Sussex (CBS) has raised the eyebrows of more than just a few county councilmen. Joan Deaver has raised a valid issue that Coastal Sussex needs better representation. Adding two members to County Council may or may not be the "silver bullet" solution to our woes, but the real issue that Coastal Sussex is being overrun by unmanaged growth is being noted throughout the County and the State.

One key to managing growth may be to start with the Planning and Zoning Commission. Coastal Sussex is definitely out of the loop when it comes to representation on this commission. State law allows up to nine members on a planning commission. So why haven't our elected officials in Dover addressed this shortcoming? Increasing Planning and Zoning wouldn't be "building big government" as some arch conservatives claim. Enlarging P&Z would simply be adding more community voices—yeah and some of them could be from Coastal Sussex—to make the recommendations P&Z hands down to Council.

County Council's serious flaw is that it acts more on behalf of developers and landowners (the few) and is motivated less to meet the needs and vision of their constituents (the many). Or as some have pointed out, "the greater good." County Council's track record is suspect. It has taken a disturbingly checkered approach to vision, to planning and development.

Nassau Grove just north of the Nassau Bridge off the southbound lane of Route One was approved only after it was stripped of its multifamily units and reduced by around 100 units. Lying near a mostly white community where many residents are retired or financially comfortable, it was characterized as being "out of character" with the surrounding communities. Ergo the rationale for downsizing and restrictions.

On the other hand, Marine Farm, out there in the rural Level 4 agricultural area and in the opinion of many, a poster child candidate for how to offend community sensibilities and not to preserve precious natural landscape and a unique environment, was approved without a blink. Multifamily dwellings and all. What happened to "out of character"? The contiguous Jimtown community is mostly African American and few are what you would call wealthy or affluent. Go figure! You would think that a few alarms that the Jimtown people raised or which Citizens Coalition voiced might be given consideration. But no! Nothing of the sort. County Council had a mission and they accomplished it. To heck with what the community wants or think they want. Sure it is just as "out of character" as Nassau Grove. Multifamily dwellings in rural farmland? Not in Nassau Grove but OK for Marine Farm? After all the developer has agreed to "give" Jimtown free sewer and water hookup. Then, let the billing for service begin!

Another battle will soon come to a head north of Milton. Isaac's Glen is a 900 "pound gorilla" looking to "pounce" on some attractive farmland, woods and waters along Route 30. The developer shamelessly defends his position by saying the state and county can't stop him because he has the right to develop where and how he wants. Well, the first round goes to County P&Z which on July 28 recommended denial based on a long laundry list of really good reasons for denial. Let's see if Council attempts to foist this one on Sussex County citizens!

Of course the developer and his legal accomplices will cry "Property Rights!" Yet this "new city" with a potential for some 4,000 residents, huge commercial and office space and assisted living really violates *my* rights, *your* rights and the *community's* rights because it robs us of the very character of Sussex County essential to why we live here and it threatens agriculture and will no doubt have a serious negative impact on our infrastructure.

I ask you please, write letters to the editor, contact your county councilman and start raising your voices for managed growth and a community that 10 years, 20 years from now will still be a great place in which to live, to love and enjoy. And by the way, to be proud of.

Michael Tyler, President