

Timestamp	First Name	Last name	City	State	Zip code	Are you representing yourself?	If not, who are you representing?	Remarks
2026-06-22 18:08:23	Jeffrey	Kubik	Pasadena	MD	21122	Yes		

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2026-07-06 10:42:31	Kate	Fox	Davidsonville	Maryland	21035	No	Growth Action Network	<p>Anne Arundel County's Agricultural and Woodland Preservation Program was created to preserve working farms, forests, rural landscapes, environmental resources, and the County's agricultural economy by purchasing or otherwise extinguishing development rights from willing landowners. Its purpose is not simply to preserve acreage on paper, but to maintain viable agricultural and woodland land in large, connected, productive blocks.</p> <p>Over several decades, the County has used multiple tools to pursue that goal: County agricultural and woodland preservation easements, Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation easements, Rural Legacy easements, agricultural tax district agreements, rural zoning, Priority Preservation Areas, Green Infrastructure planning, land preservation goals in General Development Plans, Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plans, and Region Plans.</p> <p>Anne Arundel County reports more than 14,600 acres of farms and working forests preserved through County and State programs. The County Agricultural and Woodland Preservation Program itself protects more than 6,700 acres; MALPF protects nearly 6,000 acres; and Rural Legacy easements protect additional acreage within the Anne Arundel South Rural Legacy Area. However, the County's longstanding goal is 20,000 acres (Note the South County Small Area Plan adopted in 2001 called for preservation of 40,000 acres!). After more than three decades, the County remains roughly three-quarters of the way to the reduced goal. That record should be described as substantial progress, but also as underperformance compared with adopted preservation goals.</p> <p>It would seem relevant to examine the effectiveness of Anne Arundel's Agriculture Preservation Programs, compare them to similar efforts in other jurisdictions, particularly examining "best practices" nationally and beyond. The US department of Agriculture compiles extensive data at the county level every 5 years (most recent 2022) which quantify industry trends and should help benchmark the impact of public policy.</p> <p>Bill 55-26 proposes significant alterations to existing policy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The subdivision of currently protected properties into 30 acre lots is in conflict with the established goal of preserving large connected, productive blocks. Fragmenting large protected parcels into multiple smaller ones likely with fragmented ownership seems a return toward a variant of "Family Conveyance." The subdivision and subsequent development of agricultural properties led to the repeal of Family Conveyance, enhancement of preservation easement programs and a general recognition of sustainable agriculture as an essential component of rural communities.</li> <li>•The most significant risk is the proposed authorization for subdivision of farms already protected by easements. Although Bill 55-26 would require agricultural-purpose subdivision, minimum lot sizes, Agricultural Preservation Advisory Board review, no net additional dwelling units, and new easements on the resulting parcels, subdivision still changes the structure of preservation. A single large preserved farm may become multiple separately owned preserved parcels. That may assist estate planning or farm succession, but it may also fragment agricultural operations, complicate easement enforcement, increase pressure for access roads and utility corridors, and weaken the County's longstanding goal of protecting large contiguous farming landscapes.</li> <li>•The Council should pay particular attention to access. Many preserved farms are deep rural parcels with limited public road frontage. If new 30-acre lots are created without independent frontage, access may require new private lanes, shared driveways, or recorded ingress and egress easements across the original farm or adjoining properties. Those access arrangements can create conflicts with adjoining owners, owners of existing private roads, and other easement holders. Existing private road agreements may not authorize additional users or increased traffic. A County subdivision approval should not be assumed to expand private easement rights. Without clear standards, Bill 55-26 could create disputes over road maintenance, emergency access, farm-equipment conflicts, liability, gates, utilities, and whether additional lots overburden existing private access easements.</li> </ul> <p>Before adopting Bill 55-26, the Council should require a practical impact analysis identifying how many existing preserved farms could qualify for subdivision, how many lack independent public road frontage, and how many would require new or expanded private access easements. The bill should also include safeguards requiring proof of legal and adequate access, consent where existing private road or easement agreements would be burdened, minimization of new roads across productive farmland, and findings that subdivision will not impair the agricultural viability or conservation purpose of the easement.</p> <p>Bill 55-26 may improve agricultural preservation if it increases participation while protecting the core purpose of the program. But flexibility should not come at the expense of the very preservation goals the County has pursued for decades: viable farms, connected rural landscapes, reduced development pressure, and permanent protection of working agricultural and woodland resources.</p> <p>In addition, the fiscal impacts of 55-26 should be noted.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The increase from 60% to 70% of market value paid for easements has cost consequences.</li> <li>•The review and enforcement of new or altered easements requires personnel.</li> <li>•The extension of tax credits to Rural Legacy easements has costs. The ten-year revenue loss for properties currently under RL easements approaches \$1million.</li> </ul> <p>It is not clear that the consequences of the proposal have been thoroughly evaluated. Authorizing new lots, uses of new lots, the potential for conflicts in the approval process, and the authority to renegotiate the terms and conditions of existing easements, need further review.</p>

Timestamp	First Name	Last name	City	State	Zip code	Are you representing yourself?	If not, who are you representing?	Remarks
2026-07-06 10:44:34	Kate	Fox	Davidsonville	Maryland	21035	No	Growth Action Network	<p>Growth Action Network has reviewed the proposed amendments in Bill 52-26 to either the Water or Sewer Master Plan, and the PAB meetings in which these bills were reviewed and discussed. We are writing to amplify concerns about two amendments and to ask the Council to support the Planning Advisory Board's (PAB) recommended denial of the two amendments changing 1470 Ritchie Highway and Elvaton Road/8215 Hook Road from Future Service to Planned Service. Both amendments share the same underlying problem: they ask the Council to approve a connection before the basic engineering questions about that connection have been answered.</p> <p><b>Two Amendments, Two Unfinished Sewer Studies</b>            Elvaton Road/8215 Hook Road would create an island of Planned Service — something DPW's own practice normally tries to avoid. The Sewer Study has not been completed, so DPW cannot yet say which, if any, adjoining properties might be brought into Planned Service alongside it. During the PAB meeting, DPW did not yet know whether the connection would be temporary or permanent, or whether it would route through Cox Creek or through the Broadneck Sewer Service Area. The application requests capacity for 88 EDUs based on new single-family homes, yet the PAB itself noted that this R5-zoned parcel could potentially hold 170 townhomes. Approving the category change now, and sorting out these fundamental questions later, gets the sequence backwards.            1470 Ritchie Highway is the same story with an added complication. It, too, is an island of Planned Service, and as of the May PAB meeting its Sewer Study was still under review, so — again — no adjoining parcels have been identified for potential connection. Furthermore, if the Study has since been completed and connecting parcels have been identified, then they should be included in this amendment, the owners be formally notified, and given a chance to provide testimony in a public meeting as required. But this crossing carries more weight than a single carwash: it would extend service across Ritchie Highway into a Future Service area that today runs entirely on septic systems. The implications for future development pressure and capacity demand on that side of the highway have not been meaningfully examined.</p> <p><b>The Triennial Review Makes Patience the Right Call</b>            The County was due to complete a triennial review of the 2022 Water and Sewer Master Plan in 2025. That review was intentionally delayed until the newest Region Plan was adopted, specifically so that all of the zoning changes potentially affecting sewer service could be assessed together. That is exactly the right instinct — and exactly the analysis these two amendments are asking the Council to skip. It is not at all clear that the potential sewage-treatment-capacity consequences of recent density legislation have been assessed anywhere in this process: over the past three years, the Council has passed Bill 6-23 (ADUs), Bill 17-24 ("missing middle" housing), and Bill 92-25 (cottage homes, permitting 8–20 units per acre), and we can find no evidence that DPW's capacity findings informed any of these bills, or that their cumulative flow impact has been folded back into DPW's capacity planning. DPW has said the triennial review will begin this summer. There is really no reason these two amendments cannot wait to be evaluated as part of it, rather than being decided piecemeal now. The recent emergency moratorium on new sewer hookups in the Baltimore City Sewer Service Area should have been a warning that review processes for applications should be more rigorous than not.</p> <p><b>The Process Has Not Matched the Stakes</b>            Bill 52-26 has not been the subject of a Council work session, nor has it been brought before the Our wAater Public Advisory Group, whose mission is to promote transparency in DPW's infrastructure planning by providing feedback to DPW and information to the community. The PAB, to its credit, did the work the Council has not had the chance to do in a work session — reviewing these amendments directly, with DPW and Health Department staff present, and voting to recommend denial of both. The PAB should be commended for that diligence, and the Council should give its recommendation the weight it has earned.</p> <p><b>Our Request</b>            We ask the Council to remove the 1470 Ritchie Highway and Elvaton Road/8215 Hook Road amendments from Bill 52-26, consistent with the PAB's recommendation, and to revisit both properties as part of the triennial Water and Sewer Master Plan review beginning this summer — when the Sewer Studies should be complete, the connection questions resolved, and the cumulative impact of recent density legislation finally part of the analysis.</p> <p>We appreciate the Council's attention and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns further at a work session or in any format the Council finds useful.</p>