

The Valley Conservationist

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE VALLEYS PLANNING COUNCIL INC.



From the President and the Executive Director

www.thevpc.org ~ 410-337-6877

February 2015

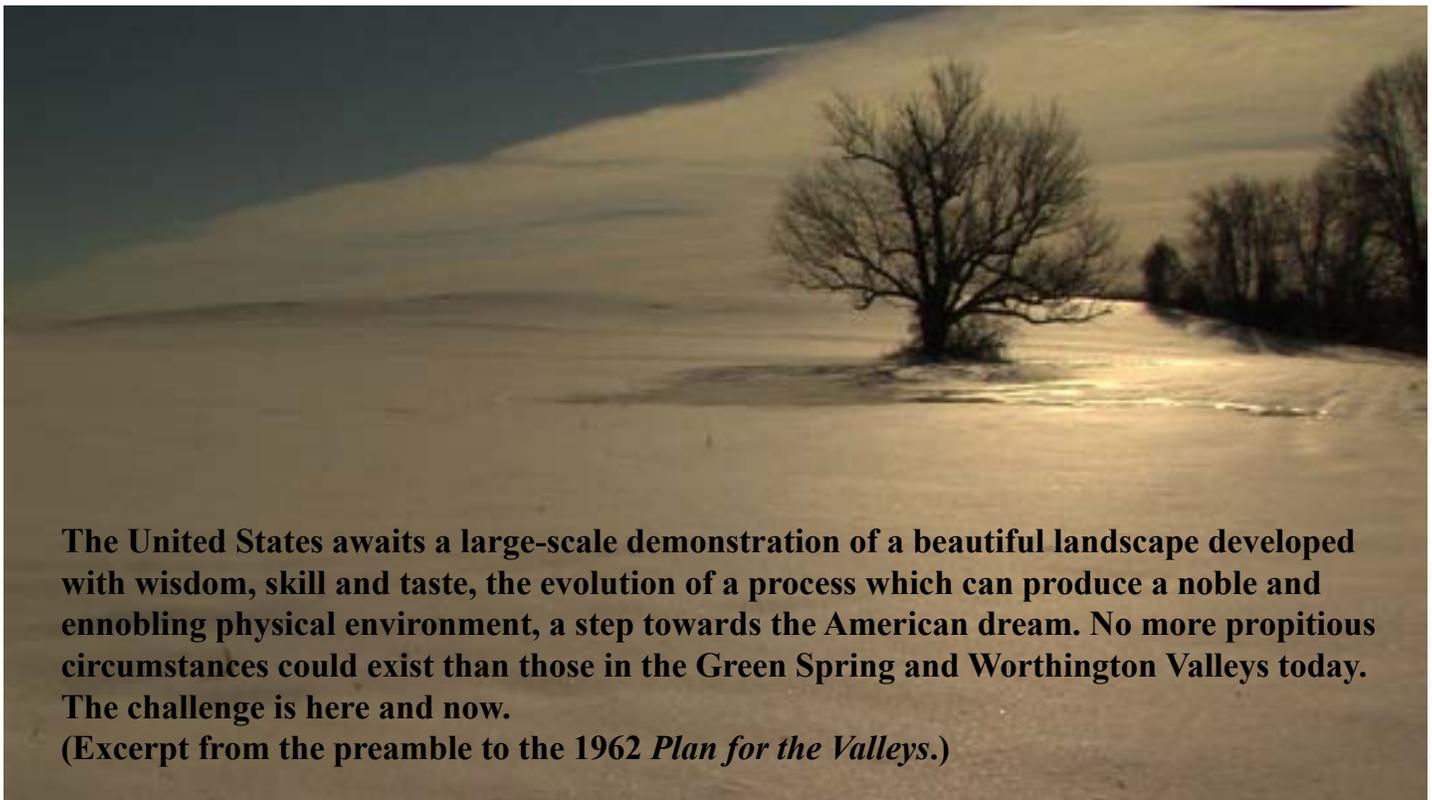
Spring, the annual time of renewal, comes our way on March 20, 2015. Daylight will be noticeably longer, vestiges of snow and ice will melt away, the ground will begin to soften, and birds, bees, and butterflies will return to the valleys. The steeplechase races will be here before we know it, providing an opportunity for hundreds of valley residents and people from the region to enjoy a thrilling event on a set of spectacular properties. It is a chance for the Valleys Planning Council and its members to share a bit of what Ian McHarg termed “the essential genius of the landscape.”

We want to thank the board and all our members for renewing their faith in the VPC mission through their contributions to the Annual Fund and special projects during 2014. This is a rare organization that could not operate without the consistent support of such loyal and proactive members. We have been very proud to lead this outstanding non-profit that has had an impressive track record for the last 52 years. Each year we have a small percentage of long-time members who let their annual contribution slip through the cracks, resulting in anticipated revenue that is sorely missed. We hope to regain any lapsed members before the spring thaw and will be sending out gentle reminders.

There are exciting changes ahead for VPC in 2015. On March 2, Elizabeth Buxton, who has served as director of the Maryland Environmental Trust for many years, will step into the role of VPC executive director. The board is extremely pleased to welcome Liz to the VPC family and looks forward to a productive future with her at the helm. Issues on the horizon include: impacts from institutional uses in the rural area; conservation burial grounds; agritourism; permitted use of helicopters; and hotspots where cumulative growth impacts are threatening rural character and straining roads and infrastructure. Stay tuned for more to come on these issues, and please join us in extending a warm welcome to our new executive director.

Pat R. [Signature]
President

Jessica Moore
Executive Director



The United States awaits a large-scale demonstration of a beautiful landscape developed with wisdom, skill and taste, the evolution of a process which can produce a noble and ennobling physical environment, a step towards the American dream. No more propitious circumstances could exist than those in the Green Spring and Worthington Valleys today. The challenge is here and now.

(Excerpt from the preamble to the 1962 *Plan for the Valleys*.)

A winter scene from the valleys, which look beautiful in any season. (Photo by Allen Moore)

Issues on the Radar for 2015

Agritourism

Councilman Wade Kach, newly-elected third district councilman, has pledged to re-evaluate the need for changes to the RC2 zone to address agritourism uses. Legislative changes were proposed in late 2014, but the bill was widely opposed by numerous organizations and individuals, including the VPC and a number of farmers. VPC has been supportive of agricultural-related tourism uses, but spoke against the inclusion of non-ag-related uses, such as weddings and other catered events, believing this would lead to the loss of productive farmland to other uses. Councilman Kach will be forming a committee to review the need, or possible lack of need, to revise existing regulations.

Conservation Burial Grounds

Legislation to allow a new use in the RC8 (Environmental Enhancement) zone was introduced at the January 20 meeting of the Baltimore County Council. Bill 6-15, jointly sponsored by Councilwoman Vicki Almond and Councilman Wade Kach, would permit by special exception a conservation burial ground on properties that meet three criteria: 1. a conservation easement; 2. at least 60 acres in size; and 3. only natural burial methods are used. Requirements also include keeping the burial sites in a natural state with no above ground markers. The legislation is expected to be voted on at the February 17 session of the Baltimore County Council.

This is viewed as an innovative land conservation tool, and is a movement that is gaining popularity across the country. The national Green Burial Council reports the number of approved providers in North America has grown from one in 1998, to more than 200 today. The first conservation burial ground in Maryland is being proposed by Deirdre Smith and Doug Carroll on a property on Resh Mill Road. To learn more about the proposed Baltimore County project, please visit the Resh Mill Preserve website: www.reshmillpreserve.com.

Helicopter Use in RC Zones

VPC has been contacted several times with questions from members about regulations dealing with helicopter use in the rural area. This is an issue that rears its head every so often. Many will recall the heated battle surrounding helicopter use at the Lucas property in the Greenspring Valley back in 2001. The upshot of the decision by the Maryland Court of Special Appeals in September of 2002 upheld a prior Baltimore County Board of Appeals decision and found that helicopters are not permitted to land at airports or other properties in the RC2 zone. Baltimore County zoning regulations differentiate between airports and helistops, and helicopter landings are "clearly precluded" uses within the RC2 zone. It may be necessary to clarify the zoning regulations to reflect this outcome.

Institutional Uses in Resource Conservation Zones

The VPC is growing increasingly concerned about new and expanding institutional uses in Resource Conservation (RC) zones. Large institutions are frequently seeking out rural areas for major facilities that are ill-suited for the rural setting and limited infrastructure and, such uses at these larger scales should be sited inside the URDL where there are available sites, areas in need of restoration and revitalization, and are accessible by public transportation.

The RC2 zone is particularly vulnerable because it does not have impervious surface caps as many other zones do. While institutional uses are generally allowed only by special exception in the RC2 zone, negotiated restrictions are often ignored or removed over time, allowing a gradual creep into greater intensity of use on the site and more impacts for the community.

Elizabeth Buxton Selected as New VPC Executive Director



The VPC board is proud to announce its choice for VPC's next executive director. After a regional search and selection process, the board selected Elizabeth Buxton to take the reins of the organization. VPC is very lucky to find someone with a proven track record and a background that is rich in land and historic preservation experience.

Liz is already well-known to many in the valleys, thanks to her work at the Maryland Environmental Trust (MET) and other preservation organizations in Maryland. As director of MET, Liz has led the state's donated easement program for the past six years. She has over 20 years of experience in historic, cultural and scenic resource preservation within the private sector and federal, state and local governments.

MET is one of the oldest and most successful land trusts in the country. With more than 1,080 easements, MET has successfully protected over 132,000 acres statewide. "VPC is very fortunate to have Liz as the next VPC executive director," said VPC's vice president Kathleen Pontone. "She has an incredible background that is well-suited to our mission, and her experience working with local land trusts across the state gives her tremendous insight to natural resource and land conservation issues. We are very excited to have someone of her experience and caliber at the helm of the VPC."

Prior to working for MET, Liz was the development and communications director for Preservation Maryland and also served as executive director of Scenic Maryland. Earlier in her career, she served as executive director of the Historic Wilmington Foundation in North Carolina. She is a native of Virginia and has lived in Maryland for 14 years. She currently resides in Towson, Maryland.

Beginning March 2, 2015, Liz will replace Teresa Moore who has served as executive director since September 2004. Teresa, who has served ably and has enjoyed her time at VPC, will be staying on for several weeks to ensure a smooth transition. She is exploring opportunities in the public or private sector where she hopes to still be helpful to the VPC cause and remain in touch with the many friends and colleagues in the valleys. She departs with much fondness for the board and members who she has worked closely with for the last decade, and she looks forward to providing Liz with a thorough orientation.



A new day is dawning at VPC. Please help
welcome our new executive director,
Elizabeth Buxton



2015 Steeplechase Dates

Elkridge-Harford Hunt Point-to-Point

Atlanta Hall, 2933 Pockock Road, Monkton

April 4 ** Noon - Gates Open ** 1:30 - Post Time

My Lady's Manor

Jarrettsville Pike at 3403 Pockock Road, Monkton

April 11 ** 10 a.m. - Gates Open ** 1:30 - Post Time

Foxhall Farm Trophy Team Chase

13920 Mantua Mill Road, Glyndon

March 15 - 1:00 p.m.

Green Spring Point-to-Point

Shawan Downs, 1401 Shawan Road, Cockeysville

March 28 ** 10 a.m. - Gates Open ** 12:30 - Post Time

Grand National

Butler Road, Butler

April 18 ** 11:30 a.m. - Gates Open ** 3:15 p.m. - Post Time

Maryland Hunt Cup

Worthington Farms, Tufton Avenue, Glyndon

April 25 ** 11 a.m. - Gates Open ** 4:00 p.m. - Post Time

Maryland Junior Hunt Cup

Shawan Downs, 1401 Shawan Road, Cockeysville

April 26 ** 11 a.m. - Gates Open ** Noon - Post Time



Photo by Allen Moore



VPC ANNUAL MEETING

May 12, 2015

6 p.m.

St. Thomas Episcopal Church
232 St. Thomas Lane, Owings Mills

ART FOR LAND'S SAKE

October 2-4, 2015

Location:

Melinda in Worthington Valley



VPC's super Art Show Committee is planning the sixth art exhibit and sale to benefit our cause.

Don't miss the outstanding Friday night preview party on October 2!

Special thanks to board member Peter Dunn for sharing his beautiful property for this year's show.

Development Projects Update

AJC's 56-lot Development Proposal on Garrison Forest Road

The Associated Jewish Charities held a community input meeting in October 2014, showing plans for 56 houses on the grounds of the Jewish Community Center (JCC) near Walnut Avenue and Garrison Forest Road. The community turned out in large numbers to express concerns and opposition. The parcel is currently one of the most intensively developed properties in the area, with numerous JCC buildings and over 400 senior apartments. The plans call for a roundabout at the intersection of Walnut and Garrison Forest. VPC has supported the prior projects on this site, but has concerned about community impacts associated with the major subdivision proposed. The next step is for the developer to file a development plan, at which time a public hearing will be scheduled.

Chestnut Ridge Golf Club Zoning Reclass Decision

In October 2014, the Baltimore County Board of Appeals held a public deliberation on the lengthy reclassification case. At issue was whether the County Council made an error in changing the zoning in 2012 from RC5 to RC7, significantly reducing the number of homes that would be allowed. A written decision has yet to be issued, but the public deliberation resulted in a finding that the County Council did not make an error, and that the Council's decision is presumptively correct. So the RC7 zoning has been upheld.

Hunt Valley Church - Beaver Dam Road

An existing church at 13015 Beaver Dam Road is planning a major expansion. The current facility is 16,000 square feet and there are plans for a two-phase expansion to 40,000 square feet and eventually to 61,000 square feet. Neighbors are concerned about the impacts to the residential area surrounding the property. The church bought the property in 1995 when the property was zoned RC4. They received a special exception for the church use. The special exception provides an opportunity to limit adverse impacts by placing conditions on the size and operation of the proposed use. However, the property's zoning was changed to RC3 in the 2012 rezoning cycle. The RC3 zone allows churches by right and has less opportunity for controls to protect the community.

Hunt Valley Baptist Church - Shawan Road

VPC and numerous nearby residents plan to appeal a decision issued in early January by Baltimore County Administrative Law Judge John Beverungen, approving a special exception for a 1,000-seat church at the former Kemp property on Shawan Road. The property is adjacent to the existing St. Mary's Orthodox Church, which recently expanded. Residents are very concerned about the cumulative environmental and community impacts of two large institutions operating back to back. The county granted the special exception for a church but reduced the requested time extension to utilize the special exception from five to three years and also prohibited a school or day care facility. Contributions are needed for the Board of Appeals case.

Stemmer House

Current owners of the historic Stemmer House on Caves Road have filed a concept plan for four new homes. The houses would be served by a panhandle driveway and would be located on the ridge area. A previous development proposed for this property was denied due to stormwater management issues and adverse impacts to the Caves Valley Historic District.

St. Paul's School Maintenance Building

VPC challenged the approval by Baltimore County, which would allow the school to build an 8,000-square-foot maintenance building on the floor of the Greenspring Valley. VPC argued that the building violates prior agreements established in 1989 when the special exception was granted to allow the school in the RC2 zone. At that time, a maximum building envelope was agreed to that was intended to restrict future buildings to a defined area on higher ground. The VPC is contemplating an appeal of the Circuit Court decision.



Return Service Requested

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Teresa Moore, Executive Director
Alice Noplos, Executive Assistant
Adair B. Stifel, Conserving Our Valleys Coordinator

* Executive Committee

Yes, I want to protect Baltimore County's agricultural, natural, historic, and scenic resources, and work to promote a balanced and rational use of the land for the benefit of present and future generations by becoming a VPC member at the following level:

- Executive (\$10,000 & above)
- Steward (\$5,000 to \$9,999)
- Guardian (\$2,500 to \$4,999)
- Preservationist (\$1,500 to \$2,499)
- Conservator (\$500 to \$1,499)
- Advocate (\$150 to \$499)
- Supporter (up to \$149)

The Valleys Planning Council is a 501 (c) (3) tax-exempt organization. Your donation is tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed.

Name _____
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The Valleys Planning Council Inc.

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