

Carol DeSoto

From: Julie Losh
Sent: Tuesday, April 29, 2025 6:04 PM
To: John Adelodun
Cc: Carol DeSoto; Crystal Hunt; Anita Nichols-Swann
Subject: Public Comments for April 29, 2025

Good evening, John: please see the comments below for tonight's PC session. Thank you.

In person

Derek Terry on Addressing Hypocrisy, Term Limits, Integrity – The speaker criticized the commissioners for hypocrisy, noting that past criticism was accepted when directed at others but is now deemed unacceptable when aimed at two specific commissioners. The speaker also accused Commissioner Bowling of using Facebook to criticize colleagues and other Democrats. They raised concerns about government decisions made with little public input, such as expanding staff, purchasing properties for \$9 million, paying a county administrator on extended leave, and granting a Super Bowl holiday to employees.

The speaker voiced strong support for term limits, arguing that most professions do not require eight or more years to gain experience. They also criticized rising taxes and growth without sufficient improvements in amenities, particularly in Waldorf and St. Charles.

Finally, the speaker defended their integrity, stating they refuse to be called a liar and reaffirmed their commitment to honesty, while thanking the commissioners for their leadership.

David Heidelbach on Concerns Over Water Allocation Transparency – The speaker raised concerns about the water supply issue, particularly in relation to ongoing negotiations involving the Town of La Plata. They noted that while the County has little control over La Plata's residential development, the town is nearing its water draw limit, which could restrict future growth. The speaker questioned why the negotiations around water allocation are being kept confidential and why the public was unaware until recently. They asked for clarity on the goals, parties involved, and the potential impact of these negotiations — including whether Charles County's water allocation might be reduced and whether this involves the WSSC pipeline.

The speaker expressed skepticism that such discussions are purely administrative, emphasizing that negotiations involve trade-offs and should include Board oversight. They questioned what benefits, if any, the transfer of water to La Plata would provide to Charles County residents. The speaker also requested transparency regarding the Hazen Sawyer engineering reports funded by public dollars, asking why they are not accessible online. Additionally, they inquired about the status and necessity of the Upper Potomac water supply project and its associated spending. Finally, the speaker briefly mentioned the Southern Maryland transit project, indicating they had been told it is a legitimate plan, not a speculative one.

Nancy Schertler on Expanding Public Input in Planning - The speaker addressed concerns about the process for updating the 2026 Charles County Comprehensive Plan. They emphasized that the plan is a critical document shaping the county's growth and must include active public participation, as required by the principles of smart growth. While the speaker acknowledged that community engagement is recognized as important in the staff's upcoming presentation to the Planning Commission, they expressed concern that the planned engagement opportunities are inadequate.

The speaker questioned how the listed key focus areas for the plan update were determined and noted that the proposed core value survey is too limited, lacking opportunities for discussion. They urged for in-person and hybrid visioning sessions across the county, modeled after the successful events during the last plan update, where residents actively prioritized issues using interactive methods like sticker voting. The speaker warned that pop-up events must not simply showcase consultants' visions without real input from residents.

They asked the commissioners to ensure the public has meaningful opportunities to participate throughout the process, stressing that final approval authority lies with the commissioners, not just the Planning Commission. The speaker concluded by criticizing a process dominated by developers and attorneys and noted that the update process officially began on March 5.

Virtual

Dontae Carroll on Support for Local Term Limits – The speaker voiced strong support for implementing local term limits, stating they are essential for creating a dynamic, responsive, and representative government. They argued that term limits bring fresh ideas, prevent stagnation, and enhance accountability by focusing officials on constituent needs rather than long political careers. While acknowledging concerns about losing experience, the speaker emphasized that institutional knowledge is maintained by professional staff, not elected officials. They stressed that term limits expand leadership opportunities for more citizens and better reflect the community's diverse voices. The speaker rejected arguments against term limits as distractions rooted in resistance to change, emphasizing that the issue is about accountability, responsibility, and transparency — not partisanship.

Joseph Mank on Support for Term Limits Accountability – The speaker expressed strong support for implementing term limits, emphasizing that the issue is widely supported by the community and is not intended to target any specific individual. They addressed concerns that some commissioners have raised about comparisons to state-level officials, arguing that local government must make decisions independently of what happens in Annapolis. The speaker offered two proposals for how term limits could take effect: one where previous terms would not count if implemented by the next election, and another where past service would count if the change is delayed until 2028 or later.

In addition to term limits, the speaker voiced support for Parks and Recreation funding and acknowledged the challenges of the current budget season. They thanked staff and commissioners for their efforts and urged caution around capital projects to avoid increasing taxes.

The speaker concluded by encouraging the Board to revisit the idea of creating a formal process for removing elected officials in the future. They supported the concept as a way to restore public trust but agreed that the threshold for removal should be high to prevent misuse for political retaliation.

Greg Waring on Local Term Limits and Accountability – The speaker supported local action on term limits, agreeing it is appropriate for the county to act independently of the state. They suggested that term limits for state delegates be addressed separately. The speaker referenced a previous draft bill on term limits, clarifying it would not have protected current commissioners as some claimed. They urged the Board to create a strong term limits policy, including applying current service toward the limit, to avoid appearing self-serving and to prioritize the county's interests over individual commissioners.

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How Did the Citizens Response Office Do?