



Jeffrey Z. Slavin
Mayor

TOWN OF SOMERSET

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Matthew Trollinger
Town Manager

March 3, 2020

Hon. Delegate Derek E. Davis, Chair
Economic Matters Committee
House Office Building, Room 231
Annapolis, MD 21401
Dereck.davis@house.state.md.us

RE: Support for Street Lighting Bill SB835/HB1034

Dear Del. Davis,

We are writing in support of SB835 and HB1034. Somerset has a long history of negotiating with Pepco regarding street light issues. In 2009 the Town engaged with Pepco to convert existing Mercury Vapor lights to emerging LED technology, and even participated as a test pilot for LED lights. In 2012, a Somerset Council member intervened in a Pepco rate case.

More recently, in 2019 the Town paid to install several LED streetlight options near the entrance to Town on Cumberland Avenue, to help determine what model would work best Town-wide. However, Pepco surprised us with a very high per pole cost for installation, so we have not been able to move ahead with the project.

This is not our first time writing in support of a bill that might help the Town in its pursuit of LED streetlights. In 2014, the Town wrote in support of HB729, which would have implemented many of the measures Delegate Carr is proposing today, And yet here we are once again – six years after HB729 was introduced; and over ten years since the Washington Post wrote an article about Somerset's struggles to convert to LED streetlights (attached). Still, Somerset is stuck negotiating with Pepco, with little to no headway made in all that time.

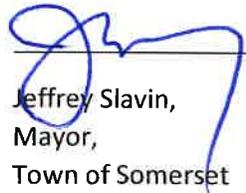
"Where People and Trees Have Deep Roots and Grow Strong"

The Town remains interested in converting to energy efficient lighting, but needs legislative help to get changes from Pepco and to level the playing field. We support Delegate Carr's bill, which would take numerous positive steps in resolving this longstanding issue, including an orderly process for municipalities to acquire utility-owned fixtures; the bill also has myriad innovative solutions to help make the endeavor more affordable, such as a fairer system for valuing fixtures, limiting payments to Pepco only for the energy used, and, perhaps most importantly, provisions that would increase efficiency of streets lights (e.g., smart dimming, part-night lighting, etc.).

However, let us be clear: conversion to LED is not just a cost-cutting measure for the Town – it is a safety and environmental issue. Our residents have asked for better lighting and support moving in this direction. The Town wants to play its part in combatting climate change and promoting energy-efficient technology, and improve safety and visibility for pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers.

We respectfully ask for a favorable report on SB835/HB1034.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey Slavin,
Mayor,
Town of Somerset



Marnie Shaul,
Council President,
Town of Somerset