



City of Bowie

15901 Excalibur Road
Bowie, Maryland 20716

HB 1056 – Racing and Community Development Act of 2020

Testimony of Timothy Adams, Mayor, City of Bowie
House Ways and Means Committee
February 25, 2020

On behalf of the Council of the City of Bowie I am pleased to submit testimony in favor of HB1056. The City of Bowie is very interested in acquiring the former Bowie Race Track property. The City, along with former Governor O'Malley and the Maryland – National Capital Park and Planning Commission, attempted to purchase the property years ago, but the sale fell through. Our interest in acquiring title has never waned.

The Bowie Race Track holds a special place in the history of Bowie. It opened in October of 1914. The last race was in July of 1985 and the training facility closed in 2015. After 2015 the facility and grounds have been used for County fairs and other similar events.

Prince George's County's Approved 2006 Master Plan for Bowie and Vicinity identified the desirability of acquiring land along the Patuxent River to provide both a buffer and a trail system for hikers and equestrians that would help conserve natural areas. The Plan specifically calls for acquisition of at least 50 acres behind the race track for recommended park use.

The City is very serious about its public stewardship responsibilities and providing opportunities for a wide range of community recreational amenities. However, transfer of ownership of the property, especially the parcels associated with the existing stable functions, is contingent upon any environmental hazards being fully mitigated. A Phase II Environmental Assessment will be necessary to evaluate the situation, and adequate financial resources will have to be identified for the study, as well as to complete any related remediation. If environmental problems are found to exist, the City would only be willing to take title to the property when all required remediation actions become fully funded.

We have heard directly from our constituents on this issue during a public town-hall meeting held at the Kenhill Center on January 4, 2020. During the standing-room only meeting

MAYOR Timothy J. Adams

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(attended by over 200 City residents), our constituents, one after the other, testified in favor of the City obtaining ownership of the Bowie Race Track property to dedicate the land to public open space and recreational uses. Our constituents have made their position clear and we agree with them.

We believe that the City is in the best position to maintain the Bowie Race Track property for recreational uses. The City currently works closely with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission concerning parcels of land near the race track that serve as parks and recreational trails. Moreover, this property is best suited for recreational purposes (as opposed to development or other uses) because the Bowie Race Track is accessible by only one road (Racetrack Road) – and Racetrack Road is already overused and subject to consistent bottlenecks.

Importantly, the City is committed to working with other parties who may be interested in the Bowie Race Track property. The City has expressed its interest in entering a long-term agreement with Bowie State University and other partners to ensure they may also use the property for public recreational activities. I recently communicated my interest in working with the University to its President. Transferring ownership of the race track property can be a win-win for the City, the County and other entities that share our constituents' vision for the use of the property.

We would prefer the provision in the Senate Bill 987 over the language in this bill. We think we have an opportunity now to resolve the issue over the title to the property and not establish a working group.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy J. Adams", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Timothy J. Adams
Mayor