



# *Town of Emmitsburg*

Mayor Donald N. Briggs

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## HB 960

### **Natural Resources Forest Mitigation Banks and the Forest Conservation Fund – Alterations**

#### **Town Position: SUPPORT**

Date: March 2, 2022  
Committee: Environment and Transportation

The Town of Emmitsburg Mayor, Donald N. Briggs, urges **SUPPORT** for House Bill 960 – Natural Resources – Forest Mitigation Banks and the Forest Conservation Fund – Alterations.

Local governments work diligently to balance growth and economic activities with the commitment to protect natural resources and the environment and to address climate change issues. Over the past two decades, local jurisdictions have protected existing forests and valuable forest ecosystems through the State's forest banking program.

Town Mayor Briggs supports the provisions in the proposed legislation that:

- Removes the December 31, 2020 deadline for the approval of a forest conservation plan, allowing local jurisdictions to continue to save existing forests and preserve existing forest ecosystems through the banking program;
- Ensures the ability of local jurisdictions to include existing forest in the banking program in order to protect sensitive areas, including stream buffers, forested floodplain, wetlands, and habitats for rare, threatened or endangered species;
- Preserves the practice of forest banking until the Harry R. Hughes Center on Agro-Ecology completes a study to evaluate forest and tree cover in Maryland, and submits its findings to the General Assembly by December 1, 2023;
- Extends the timeframe that local jurisdictions have to use forest conservation funds for reforestation or afforestation from two years (or three growing periods) to five years (or six growing periods) to provide sufficient time to effectively use these funds for planting projects; and
- Ensures adequate time to support local jurisdictions planting efforts, which include the identification of suitable planting sites, negotiation with property owners, development and execution of legal agreements, creation of reforestation plans, and
- acquisition of surveying or planting services through the required procurement processes.

Town Mayor Briggs urges **SUPPORT** for House Bill 960.