

Town of Port Deposit

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Robert Kuhs
Mayor

Vicky Rinkerman
Town Administrator

Vicky Rinkerman Testimony – Senate Bill 517
Senate Education, Energy & the Environmental Committee
February 15, 2023

Good afternoon Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan and members of the Committee. My name is Vicky Rinkerman. I serve as the Town Administrator for the Town of Port Deposit, an incorporated historic municipality located on the Susquehanna River in Cecil County.

Today I am representing Mayor Bob Kuhs and the members of the Town Council. We appreciate Senator Gallion and Senator Hershey for sponsoring Senate Bill 517 that will delay the possible transfer of a portion of the Bainbridge property until June of 2024 if adopted. Senate Bill 517 gives the town the opportunity to provide the legislature with input on the proposal to create a state park in the Port Deposit town limits.

Last year the “Port of Deposit Historical Park” was an amendment to Senate Bill 541 (Great Maryland Outdoors Act) by the House on Tuesday, March 29, 2022 and passed by both the House and Senate by the end of the day Thursday, March 31, 2022.

There was no public hearing on the amended bill and no opportunity for the members of the General Assembly to consider our input on legislation that takes up to 150 acres of land off the town’s tax rolls without any review or discussion by the Town’s Planning Commission or elected officials for inclusion in the Comprehensive Plan. Last year, the Port Deposit Town Council told the amendment sponsor (Delegate Hornberger) twice that they were unanimously opposed to the “state park” concept. The elected officials advised that the town would prefer to continue working with our partners to create a master plan for the site. The plan would include a local park providing public access to our citizens, while also pursuing available options, such as public/private partnerships, that would appropriately allow for growth while maintaining and enhancing the historic integrity and culture of Snow Hill and the Tome School sites.

Our partners include the Maryland Historic Trust, the Lower Susquehanna Heritage Greenway, the Bainbridge Development Corporation (owners of the land within the town limits of Port Deposit), the Maryland Department of the Environment, Maryland Department of Planning, the Maryland Department of Commerce, Port Deposit Heritage Corporation, Port Deposit Historic Area Commission and Planning Commission, and citizens.

The town is 100 percent committed to ensuring that the historic integrity of the archeological site of Snow Hill and the remaining historic structures and grounds of the Tome School are not forgotten or destroyed.

Any statements or comments that indicate anything different are false and preposterous. Not only does the Town of Port Deposit understand the historic significance of this property, it is determined to collaborate with all stakeholders to achieve a sustainable master plan that explores all potential available opportunities for the future of these sites.

The amendment in SB 541 last year created the *DNR Stakeholder Advisory Committee* to review and report on the creation of a State Park. I was privileged to serve as the Port Deposit representative along with many others including Senator Gallion and the Executive Director, Toni Sprenkle, of the Bainbridge Development Corporation. Although a representative from the BDC was purposely not included in the Committee, a representative was added by the DNR Secretary.

BDC Executive Director Sprenkle serves the BDC and the Town of Port Deposit with great competence. She knows the environmental challenges of the proposed acreage for the park and has worked diligently with the Maryland Historic Trust and the town to explore potential options, such as private/public partnerships, historic tax credits, etc., that would preserve the history and enhance development and access opportunities for the public to both historic sites. A meeting has been scheduled for the end of this month with MHT Director Elizabeth Hughes.

You have received a copy of the DNR Report. The Mayor and Town Council fully support the findings and recommendations of the Department of Natural Resources and stand ready to cooperate with them as they continue to develop an appropriate recommendation on this matter.

I and others associated with the labor of love to bring the former Bainbridge Naval Training Center back to productive use could talk for hours, but in the interest of time, I respectfully ask that you provide SB517 with a favorable report and refer to the Senate for action.

I am pleased to respond to any questions.

Thank you.



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