

Approved

Senior tax credit task force

Minutes of the January 16, 2007, meeting

The senior tax credit task force met on January 16, 2007, in the Ellicott Room, Howard Building, 3430 Courthouse Dr., Ellicott City, MD, at 2 pm.

The following members of the task force were in attendance: Don Dunn, Ron Weinstein, Sharon Greisz, Sue Brown, Ted Meyerson, Randy Nixon, Janice Bloodworth, Sara Hamer, Frank Chase, Sue Buswell, Pat Dornan, Colin Burke, Ron Weinstein, and Joel Yesley.

The following staff members were in attendance, Jeff Meyers, Diana Coll, and Leo Oken. Lynn Robeson from the Office of Law and Jeff Bronow from the Department of Planning and Zoning also attended.

The meeting was open to the public and the press.

Chairman Meyerson called the meeting to order at 2 p.m. The Chairman announced that this and future meetings of the task force would be limited to 2 hours each.

The minutes from January 10, 2007, were approved unanimously as drafted.

The task force discussed how to receive public comments. Mr. Dornan suggested that the task force hold hearings at senior centers. Mr. Dunn indicated that the issues before the task force affect taxpayers generally and, therefore, hearings should not be limited to senior centers. Ms. Hamer and Mr. Chase indicated that hearings could be held in multiple places. Chairman Meyerson suggested that, because of the task force's tight deadline, a public hearing should be held in the Howard Building in the near term and that other hearings could be held elsewhere later in the year. Ms. Buswell indicated that the subject matter of a hearing should be limited and focused. The task force agreed to hold a public hearing on the evening of February 1. Other hearings may be held elsewhere later.

The task force discussed the purpose of the senior tax credit. The consensus language is:

The purpose of the senior tax credit is to provide relief from higher property taxes to citizens over 70 who are least able to afford an increase in property taxes. Ms. Robeson provided information on the legal barriers to setting residency requirements. Long residency requirements would violate the U.S. Constitution's privileges and immunities clause. She also spoke on the requirement of the Maryland Constitution that assessment methods be uniform. The Attorney General has opined that credits that have the effect of freezing tax bills could be considered an attempt to violate that provision. A credit that temporarily freezes tax bills would probably pass muster, but a permanent freeze might not.

Mr. Bronow provided a report on demographics. Ms. Greisz presented financial and budgetary information.

Mr. Meyerson announced that the agenda for Thursday would include a discussion of whether the County should cap the total amount of credits or whether the tax credit should be subject to sunset.

The task force adjourned at 3:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Meyers