

approved

Senior tax credit task force

Minutes of the February 1, 2007, meeting

The Senior Tax Credit Task Force met on February 1, 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: Ted Meyerson, Colin Burke, Don Dunn, Frank Chase, Janice Bloodworth, Joel Yesley, Pat Dornan, Randy Nixon, Sara Hamer, Sherman Howell, Susan Buswell, Peter Rogers, Sue Brown, and Curt Curtis.

Others from staff in attendance were Jeff Bronow, Leo Oken, Lynn Robeson, Jeff Meyers, Donald Stitely, Ali Shirazie, Terri Hansen, and Diana Coll.

The meeting was open to the public and press.

Chairman Meyerson called the meeting to order at 2 p.m.

The minutes from January 25 and January 30 were approved unanimously.

Lynn Robeson discussed the importance of the January 24, 2007 letter from the Attorney General's Office to Delegate Guzzone that said "[b]ecause the bill acts as a freeze and was not enacted as a temporary measure, it is my view that it is inconsistent with the Uniformity Clause of the Maryland Constitution." Ms. Robeson said that the credit could be made constitutional if (1) it was made to sunset within 5 years or (2) the freeze aspect was removed.

Members of the task force reviewed the public comments that were received during the senior center visits and at the public hearing. Feedback forms and correspondence are on file in the County Council office. Members of the task force found diverse opinions ranging from repeal the credit to expand the credit. Among those who favored keeping the credit, there seemed no consensus about the income cap or whether an asset test should be added. Some people favored making the credit progressive so that poorer people got larger discounts. The task force noted that many members of the public were unaware of other tax relief programs. Members of the task force were concerned that the credit, no matter how it might be modified, does not address the needs of poor people who either do not own property or are not 70 years old or older. Some members of the task force indicated that the County should look at other issues such as reducing the income tax rate or cutting governmental spending. There was some concern that the credit could lead to some fraying of the social fabric.

The task force adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeff Meyers